



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>



THE LIBRARY
OF
THE UNIVERSITY
OF CALIFORNIA

PRESENTED BY
PROF. CHARLES A. KOFOID AND
MRS. PRUDENCE W. KOFOID



LA MARQUISE DE KERGOAT

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

5



BY THE AUTHOR OF
"THE MARTYRDOM OF
AN EMPRESS"

E. S. Consett for review

ILLUSTRATIONS BY THE AUTHOR
PAINTED IN WATER COLORS



HARPER & BROTHERS PUBLISHERS
LONDON AND NEW YORK
1905

Copyright, 1905, by HARPER & BROTHERS.

All rights reserved.

Published September, 1905.

Printed in United States of America.

ILLUSTRATIONS

LA MARQUISE DE KERGÖAT	<i>Frontispiece</i>
MÈRE CORENTINE	<i>Facing p. 44</i>
OLD BRÈRE	" 124
MÈRE VAILLANT	" 146
LA VICOMTESSE GYNETTE DE MORIÈRES	" 286
THE "BACHELOR'S PAVILION" IN THE PARK AT KER- GÖAT	" 370
PRINCE PAUL	" 426
STREET IN THE VILLAGE OF KERGÖAT.	" 528

955
C972
ti

RETIARIUS

AGAIN the net! but stooping low
The mailed knight flouts his naked foe,
Then strives to close. The snaky twine
Above the trident's levelled line
Is coiling for another throw.

See how the swordsman to and fro
Seeks for his chance! Ah, God, too slow!
Back! Back! Beware! By all the Nine,
Again the net!

"Habet!" The net holds! Blow on blow
The trident stains the sand below!
He's gone!—Ah, friend, it is not thine
To dub the combat ill or fine!
Each moment thou or I may know
Again the net.

M. M.



Book 1

As it was in the Beginning

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

CHAPTER I

Got callat deusan Armorik.

A hoary cliff his wrinkled brow that crowns
With green, and sets imperious verge,
Between the wind-swept silence of the downs
And the eternal surge.

M. M.

"ARE you all right, Lóic?"¹

The clear, young voice floated down quite distinctly, in strange contrast with the dull moans of the ever-restless sea, swerving and dashing constantly two hundred feet below on rocks which even the highest tide fails to cover.

"All right, Gäidik,"² came up another childish voice like an echo, trenching upon the leapings and splashings of the waves, that washed the base of the almost perpendicular cliff.

Gäidik was lying motionless upon the short, dry, salty grass at the top of that terrifying bastion pierced with echoing caves, her slim little form rigid, her small head, covered with a mane of tawny silken hair, overhanging the abyss, and her tiny hands holding grimly the slender aloë rope, to the other end of which she had skilfully

¹ Pronounced Ló-eek.

² Pronounced Gáh-ee-deek.

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

fastened her six-year-old brother, her own darling little Lôiç! She herself was barely twelve, but every line of her nervous, perfectly knit frame denoted an extraordinary amount of tenacity and of dogged, fearless endurance.

It was one of those magnificent days in April, somewhat hazy, but teeming with the beauty and mellowness of atmosphere which one encounters so frequently in Brittany's early spring. Crickets were chirping, emerald-green lizards were swiftly gliding from crevice to crevice, and hosts of straw-colored butterflies were flying above the thick heather and broom of the downs, while in the salt marshes a mile or so away, in a sheltered bend of the Bay of Kergöat, the *Saulniers* were out on the narrow mud dikes raking in the rich harvest of salt which the sun had coaxed for them from the shallow *étiers*, chattering and calling to one another beneath the pale-blue sky.

The rope jerked and oscillated irregularly from side to side, agitated by the motions of the invisible boy, who, clambering and crawling along by its aid twenty-five feet below the brink, was endeavoring at the peril of his life to reach the coveted nest of a hawk still a yard or so beyond the possibility of plunder. He was progressing sidewise with his merry, dauntless face close to the mica-spangled wall of granite, his out-stretched, chubby fingers sorely cramped, "pins and needles" tingling up and down his arms and legs, and the dull ache so well known to mountaineers beginning to tighten the muscles of his shoulders. Yet not a fibre of his already amazingly trained little body was allowed to relax, and inch by inch, profiting by every projection of the cliff, he unhesitatingly advanced towards his aim. Perspiration was streaming so fast down his face that it burned his eyes and

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

dripped unpleasantly into his mouth and ears, but no thought of surrender to fatigue and no question of yielding to such overwhelming odds entered the stubborn heart of this little Breton boy—as yet but a baby in age. Fearless, quick, daring, and extraordinarily impetuous, he already possessed a very marked personality, and a strong, stubborn nature brooking no contradiction.

These six first years of his small life had been spent on the rugged coast of Finisterre, at the great castle profiling in the distance its wonderful turrets and battlements against the hazy sky. There he had lived continually in the open air, rolling on the sands of the narrow, stone-girt beaches, running wild with his inseparable companion Gaidik within the limits of the immense domain, in a delicious richness of freedom and sunlight, of friendship with birds and beasts, of long, happy, heedless days and glad, pure sea-breezes.

He was so bright, so bold, so mirthful, so well disposed to all the world—when his iron little will was not crossed—that everybody gave in to him instinctively at the first hint of a frown, as if to quench even for an instant so much grace and *joie de vivre* was to fly in the face of all the designs of Providence. Indeed, it would have required a singular delicacy of touch, and wisdom and patience of a very unusual and lofty order, to deal with such a nature, and, unfortunately for him, Lõic's father, the very man for such a task, had died when his little son was barely a year old—died very suddenly and unexpectedly, leaving to his young widow, already mistress in her own right of great possessions, the entire control of their two children, and, until they came of age or married, of the whole of his large fortune and estates.

Unfortunately, also, the Marquise de Kergoat was the very last person in the world who should have been

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

burdened with such crushing responsibilities. She was a beauty who had sunk too softly into her bed of rose leaves ever willingly to rise for long out of it. Her slow, graceful indolence seemed to indicate a softness and pliant yielding bordering on weakness, and yet a physiognomist would instantly have discerned that her habitual compliance of manner was mere insouciance and carelessness, and concealed a temper strangely violent and arbitrary when fully aroused, for the firmly drawn brows, the determined moulding of the chin, and the thinness of the exquisitely curving lips never belonged to a weak personality. Her worst trait, however, was a selfishness as phenomenally intense as it was unconscious. Indeed, she would have been honestly thunderstruck had she ever been accused of so heinous a fault, but still this *intransigent egoisme* was the true reason why she almost always allowed L^oic to do precisely as he chose, since it annoyed her—excepting when in a truly royal rage—to oppose the whims of this boy, who was truly the joy and pride of her life.

She had really loved her handsome, chivalrous husband also, yet her grief when he died had been characterized especially by self-pity and by distress at losing her most devoted admirer, a man who had sheltered her from all the small troubles, the vexations, and the fatigues inherent to even so gilded an existence as hers. Always pampered, humored, admired, and deferred to, she could not conceive how anything or anybody could ever resist her—excepting, indeed, her little son, whom she allowed, when in the mood, to govern her in the most astonishing fashion.

Life seemed to conspire to ruin L^oic, for, besides his mother's limitless indulgence and enervating tenderness, broken at intervals by scenes during which she would lose

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

all control over herself and punish him as she would a restive horse or disobedient dog, there remained the fact that he was the young *Seigneur*, the shining star of his people's horizon, the hope of his house, whom tutors, servants, peasants, and retainers indulged in every fancy, never daring to control or contradict the very slightest of his wishes.

Practically, he was already his own master and that of all he surveyed, including his own devoted and untiring fag, poor, little, neglected Gäidik. For the rest, his prospects were magnificent, his future estates were as fine as any in Brittany—or, for the matter of that, as any in Europe—the name he bore had descended to him unstained by misalliance through fourteen hundred years, and his singular personal beauty, inherited from a long line of handsome men and lovely women through all these centuries, made all hearts warm to him!

How far would he bear out all this childish promise, this boy who had merely *pris la peine de naître*?

Gäidik alone, however, entered completely into all his pleasures and understood him in all his moods, even the worst! Living so very near the rose, much of the tender dew lavishly poured down upon the regal blossom should of necessity have fallen upon her, but such was not the fact. She certainly was neither spoiled nor petted, poor little thing, which in her case was something of a pity, since her little, lonely soul was peculiarly amenable to tenderness and equally averse to any sort of harshness. Thus all her warm, ardent heart concentrated itself upon Lōic—*her Lōic*, as she called him—the acme of all perfection in her eyes, to whom she could refuse nothing.

They had much of the same nature, these two children, much of the same rare intellect and rare courage, and

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

there existed between them a perfect understanding, born perchance of their being so astonishingly alike, excepting for the fact that she added to the many qualities they had in common a surprising amount of self-control, forced upon her by her mother's unnatural aversion.

To-day Lóic had pleaded so hard to be lowered over the edge of the cliff in order to obtain the young hawks he passionately desired to rear and train, that, confident in her strength and ability, Gäidik had coolly performed this perilous feat, taking first the sole precaution of passing the free end of the rope a couple of times around the trunk of a broken pine, long ago killed by the harsh sea-wind which eternally sweeps that terrible coast.

There was a curiously sailor-like precision and deftness in everything those two children did, a pronounced sailor swing even in their walk, and they had so absolute a contempt for all forms of danger that their escapades were the terror of the entire household, and caused a perpetual feeling of dread and of impending calamity to their personal attendants.

Gazing at the distant horizon whence the waves arrived at a furious gallop, to break brutally in sheaves of dazzling foam many, many dizzy yards below her, Gäidik still lay motionless, flat on her stomach, the sea-wind blowing her hair about, the sun playing hide-and-seek with the gold in its bronze, her hands still inflexibly holding the rope, her dreamy eyes—gray and changeful like the sea itself—drinking in, as it were, the whole mystery of Brittany, which holds close to the past, and moves the living to a curious sense that they are dead and are dreaming in their graves, so firm a hold upon tradition and ancient poetry and mysticism has this old land preserved.

She was clothed in short, straight garments impeding

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

her liberty of action in no possible way, and she looked no bigger than a sea-bird on the crest of the huge wall of rock. Truly she reminded one somewhat of an audacious gull in her passion for the water, her indifference to danger, her swift, graceful, fierce ways, which had gained for her the sobriquet of *La petite Mauve* (the little Mew), for she seemed to have assimilated in her tiny self all the health and vigor, all the strong activity and delicate, fragrant freshness of the ocean.

For one thing, Lōic and Gäidik were forever in the water, when they were not scampering along the shingle and flat rocks left bare by the ebbing tide, fishing for prawns and crabs with long-handled nets; or farther back on the moorland, where the keen air blew and the frisky brown rabbits chased one another through the gorse.

Gäidik dreamed of all this and of many other delights as she gazed, that delicious April morning, upon the tender light on rocks and sky and sea, and watched quite unconcernedly and unanxiously for the occasional fall of a stone displaced by her little brother's foot—a fall which made no sound for an astonishingly long while, and then produced a faint and distant concussion upon the jagged, teethlike blocks below, among the muttering waves.

She knew—although she could not see him—that Lōic was upon a narrow ledge, not flat, but inclined somewhat upward from the sheer face of the cliff, thus forming a rugged shelf of solid granite; that he had landed safely, since he had called back "all right" to her question, and this was enough for her entire peace of mind. Not for a second did this strange child realize the appalling danger of the position; nor did she doubt that she could draw him up again with as much facility as she had lowered him over the ghastly edge, for it was simply not in her

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

nature to calculate the consequences of a daring deed. That Lóic might become exhausted by his toil, or be seized with vertigo and fall, dragging her with him down, down, down to the sharp, broken, cruel angles of the uncouth rocks, was not even to her a possibility. No! the exploit possessed for her the elements of a good joke, that was all!

Now and again, after the manner of a sailor who is working out of sight with a life-line, she jerked the rope, which jerk was punctiliously returned by the audacious little fellow who now had doubtless reached his prize, for the affrighted and piercing cries of a struggling bird began to make themselves heard with extreme plainness, startling the rock-martins laboring at their conical clay dwellings, and the hovering gulls sporting above the crests of foamy incoming breakers.

"Ah, he has got it!" she murmured, with a triumphant little laugh, and she crawled farther forward, now overhanging the precipice by the full length of her head and shoulders, peering with straining eyes, but quite uselessly, down, since at this point the cliff sloped inward instead of outward as a respectable cliff should do.

Suddenly her cogitations on the matter were brutally put an end to by a pair of muscular hands closing around her waist and attempting to drag her backward, but Gäidik stood the strain like a rock. Quick as thought she twined her legs around the pine trunk to which the rope was made fast *tant bien que mal*, and, still holding on like grim death to the rope itself, she silently struggled to free herself with a tenacity quite out of all proportion to her slender elegance of make.

Gäidik de Kergôat was one of those beings whose litheness is greater than their muscular force—although that was by no means to be despised—but her powers

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

of endurance were phenomenal, and, although recognizing that it was of no avail, she still fought on as Bretons do against any odds.

"*Bon Dieu! de Bon Dieu!* she is made of steel!" growled her opponent, stepping back with one foot in order to obtain surer leverage and lift her from the ground, but as he did so he caught sight of the rope, guessed what manner of object was attached to its lower extremity, and the cold perspiration started on his forehead. He stopped dead, still holding Gaidik tightly, but too much terrified by his discovery to dare a move in any direction.

For a fleeting second he remained motionless as though changed to marble, a cloud obscuring his sight, and quite heedless of the execrations of the panting Gaidik, who, writhing still in his unyielding grip, was furiously demanding whether this "sacred imbecile" intended to kill both herself and Lõic at one stroke. In another second, however, he was himself again—his horror a thing forgotten—and, seizing the rope unhesitatingly at a point below Gaidik's unrelaxed hold upon it, he hauled in slowly, deftly, and steadily—a difficult feat to perform without some risk to the boy, since he was only able to guess at the latter's position beneath the overhang of the cliff, and dreaded to startle him by a warning word.

Fortunately, Lõic, having accomplished his perilous task, had just signalled this fact by a final tug at the line, and, little suspecting what had occurred, was helping with all his might; so that coil after coil ran easily up until at last a little head, covered with thick, wavy hair, as brilliant in the sunshine as that bronze of Roman emperors of which the substance was enriched with ungrudged gold, a face that had the color and beauty of a

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

flower, with already the classic lines of his race, and illumined by great, rebellious eyes of the same hue and expression as Gäidik's, appeared above the edge of the cliff, followed by an erect, square-shouldered little body that immediately became rigid with astonishment.

CHAPTER II

The stubborn folk of Arthur, strong of hand,
In loyal heart and mystic soul yet free,
Thrust to the utmost limits of the land
Fenced by the Savage Sea. M. M.

"KADOC!" the boy cried. "How do you come here?" and his wide-open eyes stared angrily at his rescuer.

Kadoc was a tall, handsome Breton sailor between forty and fifty, whose tight-fitting, blue woollen jersey revealed extraordinarily powerful arms and a magnificently broad, muscular chest. He had been the late Marquis's *matelot*, and spent most of his time in uncomplainingly rescuing his dead master's orphaned children from similar self-sought and appalling perils; but just then he was really furious, since the "joke" had for once been carried too far even for him. Indeed, he did not speak immediately after lifting his young master over the lip of the cliff, together with the screeching baby-hawk removed from its nest under such violent protest, and now tightly buttoned within Lœic's jacket.

"What is to be done with you, you naughty ones?" he ended by saying, his voice stern and imperious as he towered over the children, his head thrown back, a flash of honest indignation in his blue eyes. "Shame, Mademoiselle Gårdik, and shame on you, too, Monsieur Lœic, for coaxing her to help you into such mischief!" But Lœic held his ground quite unabashed.

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

"Don't you dare to scold Gäidik!" he cried. "She is a good girl, and wanted to go down herself, but she was too heavy for me to lower down to the hawk's nest. You are always spoiling sport; but, anyhow, I have one of the birds, so I don't care!" and, shaking off Kadoc's restraining hand, he marched off in the direction of the castle, muttering and grumbling as he went, his dark, straight brows grimly knit together.

"Don't you understand, Monsieur Lõic, that you might both have been killed, and that it was only by a hair's-breadth that I arrived in time? Why, Mademoiselle Gäidik could never have hauled you up, and—*Bon Dieu! de Bon Dieu!* what a death!" Kadoc cried, following him closely.

"Eh! What? Could not have hauled me up? Gäidik?" the boy retorted over his shoulder, much offended. "You don't know what you are talking about. Why, Gäidik is as strong as you are, I tell you. She has pulled me up and down the cliffs a million times already!"

"At that spot?" questioned the incredulous Kadoc.

"Well, at that and other ones, of course I *climb* up and down. It is not so steep as you think, you old idiot; but still, without the rope, I could not do it, because there is only just room on the little teeth of the rock to put my feet on; so don't bother me any more. You could not do it yourself."

Kadoc raised his eyes to heaven in pious horror, but still his sternness relaxed and he could not repress a smile as he eyed his tiny lord with ill-concealed pride and delight. "He is game, our little marquis," he murmured. "Kergõat blood pure and simple, never afraid of anything and always loyal." The sailor could no longer be abrupt or angry, and he followed his unruly charges across the purple-flowering heath, his tanned

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

face singularly brilliant, his great height and naturally noble carriage making him a most striking figure. As to Gaidik, a warm, tender smile had broken over her defiant eyes and set mouth while listening to her little brother's spirited and enthusiastic defence of her.

From the top of the cliffs where they now walked the eye could sweep over the sea north and south, at that moment fanned by the freshening breeze into a vast field of dazzling color. Behind Cape Kergoat stretched moorland, marshes, and forests of cork-oak, crossed by many streams fringed with osier-beds, brown-tufted reeds, sea-daffodils, and sea-stocks, where all was quiet save for a bittern's cry, a snipe's shrill scream, or the rustle of the wind through the low-growing scrub of rock-roses around the tall menhirs and cromlechs, profiling their gaunt shapes against the pale sky.

Soon they reached the cultivated land, walking between fields of waving, foamy *blé-noir* in full bloom and of shadowy azure flax, finally entering the *chemin-creux* which leads to a side gate of the Home Park.

There is nothing comparable to Breton *chemins-creux*, hedged in as they are by a cool, fragrant riot of tumbling ivy, lustrous holly, honeysuckle, clematis, and ferns, through which the tall spearlike fronds of pink foxgloves and the delicate mauve of harebells rise in dazzling profusion.

The *chemin-creux*, or "sunken path," is a strictly Breton institution encountered nowhere else in the world. Always dewy, dusky, fresh, and thickly carpeted with soft mosses, it is the birthplace of the finest eglantines and blackberries in Christendom, and is invariably finished off on both sides by a glowing upper fringe of golden-blossomed gorse and whin, diffusing a fragrance as of apricots and honey from early April to late November.

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

Lôic, with the irrepressible energy of his tender years (to which was added a characteristic heedlessness of consequences), rushed along, clambering up and down the banks of this particular *chemin-croix* in quest of flowers, disregarding with equal contempt the sharpness of many a thorn or bramble, and the increasing outcries of the reawakened and surprisingly able-bodied hawklet buttoned inside his jacket, and now lustily complaining of so erratic a mode of progression.

Lili, harc 'antet ho dellion, war vord an dour zo er prajou (the silver-leaved lilies are already edging the ponds and the meadows), Gaidik called out to him in Breton, as with the swiftness of an avalanche he came tumbling towards her, brandishing a handful of fox-glove.

"Oh, are they? Then we will go and fetch some tomorrow," he replied, with the grand air acquired in a household where he was, practically speaking, supreme lord and master. He enjoyed to the full every moment of the day, this child of quick angers and equally swift repentances, taking punishment for his misdeeds when at last it came, with an assumption of complete indifference and a stubborn, superior droop of the eyelids which exasperated his mother far more than shrieks or complaints would have done, and frequently bursting, as soon as he was released and out of her sight, into perfectly genuine roars of laughter over the merest trifle that chanced to amuse him.

Swiftly the now fully reconciled trio walked on between the flower-starred banks of verdure; above which antique oaks, gnarled by the sea-wind, bent towards one another like dwarfs and crook-backs performing the devil's dance, and at last they reached the ivy-draped postern-door opening into the thickness of the mediævally

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

turreted wall which still in all its primordial integrity surrounds the immense park of Kergoat.

That park is marvellous. Sleeping in shadowy stillness, its terraced lawns and magnificent parterres, its straight avenues of century-old trees, its wild debauch of blossoms, its tangles of flowering shrubs, with here and there the slender jet of a fountain sparkling through the branches, are almost indescribable, and in its midst there is the hazy shimmer of an exquisite lake studded with the above-mentioned "silver-leaved" lilies—a species peculiar to Brittany.

In the ideal atmosphere of that privileged region, mellowed by the near proximity of the Gulf Stream, all manner of plants and trees thrive and multiply, if only they be sheltered a little from the ever-present wind, and within those great walls Himalayan cedars and Oriental palms, feathery bamboos, and Siberian pines stand cheek by jowl, towering above thickets of almonds and hawthorn deliciously pink; lilac and laburnum so laden with fragrance that the mere smell of them sends little thrills of gladness throughout one's whole being; while acacia, myrtle, camellias, giant fuchsias, and pomegranates run riot beneath Biblical-looking, broad-leaved fig-trees, and shelter nodding companies of anemones, jonquils, tulips, and irises, amid which bees drone and countless birds twitter and dart to and fro.

Kadoc and the children swung onward quickly, frightening extravagantly long-tailed lizards as they stepped over the grass, and scattering many bronze-corsleted *hannetons* buzzing amid the long, pendent clusters of acacia and wistaria.

Lôic was enthusiastically discussing a *paludier* wedding which was to take place that very day punctually at eleven. They were "his" *paludiers*, working all the year

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

round in "his" salt-marshes, and therefore was the diminutive marquis expected to give away Jeannik, the bride, a blue-eyed *fleur de lin* of seventeen, who was considered one of the beauties of the tiny fishing village nestling under the shelter of "his" grim Gothic castle. Hervé, the bridegroom, nephew to Kadoc, was very well off for those parts, and his marriage feast would be arranged quite regardless of expense.

"I'll have to kiss the *marités*! Lōic exclaimed, in his abrupt fashion, striding along with both hands stuck deep in the pockets of his wide white Breton breeches, his ruddy locks fluttering beneath the broad brim of the classical Chouan hat loaded with multicolored *chapelouses* (thick chenille cords wound round and round the low crown in and out of broad silver buckles), and the sun-rays glittering upon the rows of fleur-de-lysed buttons adorning his short, crimson *ratiné* jacket, thickly broidered with weird silken patterns in accordance with Breton etiquette.

The little hawk was silent now, probably out of sheer lassitude.

"I'll put on my silver and gold embroideries, and a big bouquet of white roses on my shoulder. You'll see if I'm not the finest dancer when I lead the *ronde*!" he continued, with that nothing-doubting assurance of his, while his magnificent eyes smiled frank and friendly and serene up at the steel-blue orbs of his big *garde-du-corps*.

"J'aime bien les cotillons rouges.
J'aime mieux,
Les cotillons bleus!
Les cotillons rouges!
Les cotillons bleus!
Ce sont les bleus,
Que j'aime le mieux!"

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

He sang merrily, skipping in unison with the quaint *ronde* tune, a gay, handsome little figure, the brightness of which reflected a long after-glow.

"Oh, I am the Seigneur from to-day on, Gäidik! Don't you call me a baby any more! Just think, I am Jeannik's father—Jeannik, who is ever so much older than you! Isn't that fine? I'll be your father, too, when you get married, and that will be soon. Old Mam-Goz (Granny) Koäder says that mamma will be mean enough to get you married at fifteen, because she wants to get rid of you. My poor little dearest darling Gäid!"

"Hush, Monsieur Löic! How can you say such things?" Kadoc interrupted. : "You know that Granny Koäder is a spiteful old cat, who half the time does not know what she is talking about. If you are to be our Seigneur, from now on you'll have to be careful not to repeat such ridiculous nonsense. Surely you do not want it to be said of you as in the chanson: *Ann dud jentil navez zo kri Givel a oare goz da vistri.*" (The new Seigneurs are bad; the old ones were better masters.)

The boy gave no heed to the reproof. His brows were suddenly drawn together in painful thought; his curved, rosy lips were shut fast.

"I don't want you to marry, my Gäid!" he said at last, very slowly. "I cannot do without you; you are *my* Gäidik—nobody else's. I'd kill anybody who tried to take you away!" and with a sudden violent rush he threw himself into his sister's arms, crushing the hapless hawklet so ruthlessly in so doing that the poor bird once more began to utter piercing cries.

"Sainte Vierge! Monsieur Löic, do behave yourself!" cried the nonplussed Kadoc, while Gäidik burst out laughing, though there was a dimness in her eyes. She was never talkative, holding herself generally much

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

aloof—not out of shyness, for she was a brave little thing, nor yet out of temper, since, except for rare fits of almost untamable passion, she was exceedingly good-natured and serene, but as the result of a coldness and indifference that seemed strange in one so young. With Lōic, however, she was a different being, and, holding his hand pressed fast in hers, she promised with many endearments never to leave him, never to vex him—never! never! never!

“I could not live without you,” explained the pacified lad. “You are a regular boy; you can do all that boys can; you can row and sail and steer, and dive, too, like a duck, and run and shoot and climb. There was never any one like you, Gäid!”

Gäidik looked at him, keenly touched.

“Ah, my dear! my dear!” she whispered, “I should not care to live any longer, either, if I had not got you.”

They were silent awhile—an unusual thing with them—walking steadily on beside Kadoc, who was watching them curiously. He remembered the night when his master had died five years before, intrusting those two little ones to his watchful care; and he sighed. “They are strange little creatures,” he thought, sorrowfully, “and it would have been better if they had not had that devil in them that will never let them be still, and will never be subdued, I am afraid. There is fierce fighting blood in them, and it will out; but I suppose the good God knows best what to do with such wild birds—one may be sure of that at least.”

They were nearing home now, and Lōic suddenly sprang forward, all his troubles forgotten, calling loudly, *Ah, voilà Maman!* as a graceful, slender, erect woman advanced towards them under the warm shadow of the flowering lilacs. Her dark eyes and softly chiselled feat-

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

ures, the dainty rose of her oval cheeks, the deeper rose of her small, delicately thin-lipped mouth, and the raven blackness of the thick bandeaux framing her haughty, obstinate brow, made a very beautiful picture as she swept slowly along, her hands full of freshly gathered flowers, her pale-gray morning gown trailing noiselessly on the velvety grass.

Her whole face brightened at the sight of the boy running towards her, and the perception of her beauty became acute; it sparkled in the half-light of the leafy dimness, her eyes gleamed like jewels—soft, deep, luminous jewels, like live, brown diamonds—her whole being expanding with passionate pride, as, regardless of the havoc made of her superb bouquet, she threw one arm about him and kissed his moist forehead, his eyes, even his little sunburned neck, with greedy tenderness.

Kadoc and Gäidik had joined them, and the sailor, *béret* in hand, stood mutely watching the encounter, while Gäidik, also without a word, awaited the moment when she would be allowed to kiss the slender hand extended to her every morning in a sort of patronizing greeting.

Madame de Kergoat's voice was clear, smooth, and crisp-cut, especially when she addressed her little daughter, for this child's every look and gesture was distasteful to her. During the short walk up the smooth lawns between the flowering trees towards the castle, she used that crisp-cut voice to some purpose on the subject of dishevelled little girls, who, at nine o'clock in the morning, have already managed to lose the prim freshness consequent upon their matutinal tub—all this delivered in the tones of one launching a polite but cutting denunciation. Occasionally she appealed to Kadoc, who was listening to her with an attitude of respectful enlightenment, of

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

instinctive feudal homage, but with an expression in the depth of his stern eyes which, had she once glanced his way, might have given her some food for reflection.

Yet although Madame de Kergoat's optics, like those of the fly, had usually the privilege of seeing all around at once, she did not observe the peculiarity of the gaze fastened upon her, nor the eloquent reproach contained in her little daughter's big gray orbs.

What a dazzling vision she was, that beautiful mother who, according to Lōic's own statement, could be "so cruel nasty" when she wished! Just then the little Seigneur's face had assumed a droll expression, and he winked quite unblushingly at his sister. *He* knew how to manage her, and, annoyed beyond measure by the lengthy fault-finding, he, with magnificent aplomb, at last created a diversion by displaying his treasure, and by declaring that it was too fine a morning to scold, joining his small brown hands as he spoke, and separating them like a swimmer, in an eloquent gesture that swept the horizon. Madame de Kergoat's attention was instantly riveted on him, her attitude relaxed, she smiled, shook her jewelled fingers gayly at him, and led the way, with him clinging to her arm, up the southern terrace steps, while Gāidik still held back, her small visage perplexed and troubled, her gray eyes snapping with repressed feeling of a singularly unpleasant sort.

Kergoat is one of the handsomest relics left to us by generations who knew how to build on the lip of a sheer cliff. Grimly mediæval, it is a regular seaside fortress, with ponderous round towers, dangerous-looking *mourtrières*, machicolations, and *chemins de ronde*, its immensely thick walls capriciously streaked with gold and silver hued lichens, and exquisitely overgrown by vigorous garlands of ivy hundreds of years old,

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

One end of the long, wide, granite terrace, which the little party had reached, was arranged as a sort of outdoor dining-room. A blue-and-crimson awning was spread overhead, and on a square bamboo table, surrounded by comfortable chairs, was disposed on an embroidered Russian table-cloth a very tempting breakfast. The tall samovar hissed softly, fruit and cream and crisp little loaves alternated with sheaves of cornflowers and poppies, and a couple of splendid Great Danes, answering respectively to the names of Plick and Plock, lay luxuriously in possession of a warm-hued rug near by.

The curtain had risen for the children upon Act Two of the beautiful summer day.

CHAPTER III

A people like a Menhir—without change,
Unhewn, immovable and vast—
Wedded by legends, quaint beliefs and strange,
Unto a misty past. M. M.

MEANWHILE, at the foot of the castle cliff, Jeannik, the little bride, was being dressed for the ceremony. Her cottage, dating in style and accommodation back to the primitive epochs of Brittany, was a gray, rectangular little house built of blocks of undressed granite, as severe in its outward aspect as one of the jagged rocks of the beach whereon it looked, save for the redeeming fact that the roof was of exquisitely mellowed old thatch, constellated with clusters of waxen, pink and pale-yellow *Fleurs de Jésus*—a sort of profusely flowering moss, the habitual parasite of such thatches—enhanced here and there by tufts of blue irises cresting its low gable.

No sooner had you passed the wide, half-glazed door, than you left behind you all trace of the nineteenth century, and found yourself transported as on a magic carpet, six or seven hundred years back, amid furnishings handed down from generation to generation, and customs as well as costumes of equal antiquity. The cupboard-beds, *lits-clos*, of dark oak polished by usage and by continual rubbings to the dusky brilliancy of ebony, rose one above the other on both sides of a monumental hearth, their finely chiselled silver hinges and red-bordered green serge draperies adding a richness to their quaint

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

aspect, while the ponderous, almost immovable central table, its enormous thickness scooped out into the circular concavities that take the place of crockery, and receive twice a day the fragrant *Soupe aux choux*, or thick buckwheat-mush, which forms the ruddy *Paludier's* staple food, was in itself a revelation of fashions and ways long fallen into disuse everywhere but in Basse-Bretagne.

In front of a heavily carved *Bahut*, matching in splendor of tone the rest of the furniture, stood Jeannik, surrounded by her *Filles d'Honneur* (bridesmaids) and her old mother, towards whom she raised her soft blue eyes, all aglow with a tender, appealing, mocking, half-defiant, half-shy smile, as ornament after ornament was added to her already gorgeous costume.

There was not much light within the house, for the paternal French Government maintaining a heavy tax on all windows, even the richest Breton peasant is content to admit the sun only through time-honored half-doors and a few narrow loop-holes, which for the most part are nearly smothered in clinging vines and curtained by vigorously verdant *pariétaires*; but still that particular morning was lavish of its brightness, now that the sun had pierced the early mist, pulsating with warmth and golden rays like a thing alive, and, moreover, the dancing waves lapping the lavender-crowned sea-wall of the tiny garden, sent like huge reflectors some of their blue shimmer and dazzle right into the oak-raftered room.

Thus it was possible clearly to distinguish the slender, archaic figure of the little *Marite*, clad in a straight-falling, rather short skirt of thick purple cloth, encircled five times with four-inch-broad bands of black velvet, and revealing at the hem the successive ornamental green and red selvages of five white cloth petticoats, each a lit-

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

tle longer than the next above. With this went a corsage and stomacher of cloth of gold, with wide purple cloth, velvet-bordered sleeves, a rich purple silk apron, above which was chastely folded a diaphanous kerchief of snowy lace, and a pointed *coiffe* and broidered *serre-tête* of finest mull—*le pignon*, as it is called—around which a double wreath of white and pink roses was attached by golden pins. Around her slender neck hung from a gold pailletted velvet ribbon, the delicately wrought golden cross surmounted by a Breton heart, which is the distinguishing sign of the married woman, and on the already toil-worn little hand shone the clumsy golden heart-and-crown *Anneau de Fiançailles*.

Young and lovely, and pure, truly, as a flax blossom, was Jeannik, a pleasant hint of red in her rounded cheeks (that covert carmine of perfect health which seems to glow through the satiny skin of young girls brought up à *la dure* and always in the open air), and in her sumptuous attire she gave the impression of having just stepped from the parchment pages of some illuminated missal, or dropped out of one of those wonderfully painted sanctuary windows still to be found in ancient Breton fanes, where brilliantly garbed saints are represented in very much that same costume.

The mother, tall, imposing, dignified, wearing her own ancient *Habit de Noce*, its gold and silver threads, its silken broideries now softened to deliciously melting hues, gazed tenderly and somewhat sadly at this, her youngest child, her ewe-lamb, for the six others, all boys, had at one time and another found their deaths in the great tomb of the Breton coast—*perdus à la mer*, as they say there—yet when the girl looked up she saw nothing but a smile on the faded lips and in the heroic eyes, paled by so many tears shed in secret.

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

At last *Madame la Mariée* is ready. A last look at the tiny mirror which reflects her like a little pool of green water—thanks to the delicate ferns obscuring the *lucarne*, near which it stands on a three-legged stool, and which produce the effect of a finely meshed net of verdure drawn across the aperture—and she kneels down before the tall, black-and-silver crucifix to say her beads until her *fiancé* comes to fetch her away, accompanied by *Monsieur le Marquis*, aged six, who is to replace the father many long years dead.

Outside, the sounds of *Bignious*, energetically blown, are rapidly drawing nearer, and down the meandering path, with its rough stone walls, its ancient Celtic stone crosses gauntly profiled at regular intervals, its square-hewn, thinly scattered little stone houses, its tangle of flowering blackberry-vines, and its patches of flowering mosses and lichens mantling the irregularities of all that stone, a thin cloud of dust begins to float up from many feet—a transparent screen of white dust and powdered sand which, dancing in the sunlight, looks like the fumes of some great boiling caldron full of molten gold and silver.

Les Sonneurs (the bagpipe players) are advancing heading the long double file of wedding guests, and *Mère Corentine*, who has stepped to the door, catches sight of the tall form of her future son-in-law, stepping forth in all the bravery of his crimson jacket, five white woollen waistcoats, wide, snowy breeches, crimson, gold-clocked stockings, canary-colored shoes, and broad black Chouan hat looped up for the occasion with a big cluster of red and yellow roses. Beside him, keeping excellent time to the lively lilting music, marches little *Lôic*, also dressed in a superb Breton costume, all glittering with priceless antique silver and gold Armorican embroidery, his face flushed

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

with pride and importance, his tiny feet hardly touching the earth.

Truly that *Départ de la Mariée* would have made a striking picture-subject, for the cortége was a singularly brilliant one, with its extraordinary variety of cantonal costumes, each more dazzling than the last, and the tiny Marquis, who headed it, leading the shy, pretty, blushing Jeannik, was alone a sight worthy of note.

The road was short, and soon the long, multicolored train of wedding guests entered the little church-yard, fragrant with lavender, rosemary, and thyme, where wild flowers and feathery, waving herbs almost conceal the humble granite crosses, marking the spot where many a stalwart fisherman, washed ashore after some destructive storm, sleeps his last sleep. They clustered for a moment round the quaint porch of the old, old little church, a lovable, ancient thing of gray stone, green and brown with mosses.

Extraordinary gargoyles, grimacing like gnomes and kourrigans, surmount that porch, which is deeply carved with massive garlands of clumsy, fantastic flowers and fruit and foliage, by hands dead many centuries ago, while ponderous, weather-beaten saints stand like grim sentries on each side of it.

It was almost dark within, and only confusedly at first could the dimmed beauty of the decorations be discerned. Indeed, the veiled rays of the sun only just gleamed through the narrow painted windows, as if filtered by sombre jewels. Little by little, however, the eye became accustomed to this diapered penumbra, wherein one faintly distinguished the beauty of the altar, the rich golden brocades of the aged priest's vestments scintillating on a faded white satin background, the tall silver candelabra flashing their tiny stars of light amid

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

a mass of white heather and yellow genesta, brought from the neighboring *Landes*, and the countless memorial tablets encrusted upon the thick walls, bearing the sinister words, *Perdu à la Mer*, following the names of the countless dead resting at the bottom of the cruel, capricious ocean.

Overhead the bells were ringing joyously, and through the open door, where beggars had foregathered, from many a mile around, in the anticipation of alms — like a miniature *Cour des Miracles* — the clear notes of a *ronde* sung by some giddy young sailors hurrying to join the last stragglers, were wafted in:

“ Fendons le Bois
Le Roy!
Chauffons le Four
L'Amour!
Riez la Belle
Car c'est le jour!”

On the right of the altar there is a sumptuously carved and generously proportioned pew, surmounted by a coat of arms. To-day it was occupied by the Marquise de Kergoat, Gäidik, and their following, but *Monsieur le Marquis*, firm at his post, knelt immediately before the officiating curé to the left of the bride. The boy's face was grave, his big gray eyes looked wise and serious, in spite of the inquisitiveness of his eager little profile, which was all his mother and sister could see of him. This was a great day for him, a day during every minute of which he fully realized the importance of his rôle, the great dignity of his office; and as he listened to the familiar Latin murmured above his ruddy locks, he felt as if he had now left childhood forever far behind, and was really acting the part of a good and kindly Seigneur to his people.

THE TRIDENT AND THE NBT

In his chubby, white-gloved fingers he tightly held the rings which he was to hand to the curé in a few seconds, and when the words: "*Ego conjungo vos in matrimonium in nomine Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus-Sancti*" fell upon his ears, he accomplished this little function with extreme courtliness, bowing low as he slipped the golden circlets into the out-stretched palm of the venerable officiant.

"*Benedic Domine annulos hos*"—the old voice was mellow and impressive, and at the end of the prayer the devoutly intoned "*A-a-a-men*" was echoed by the clear, distinct accents of Lōic, who in his double quality of Father and of *Seigneur* had been instructed to display a very special fervor during the whole ceremony.

The boy was, moreover, notwithstanding his many pranks, a true child of Brittany, where things mystical become part of one's very bones. They seemed to him the natural accompaniments of the crystallinely pure atmosphere of the Church in which he was being brought up, and he entertained a very deep respect and reverence for its gorgeous ceremonies.

A happy child, he had his splendid castle, his lovely gardens, his cliffs, his beloved toys and joys and pleasures; he had Gäidik, whom he adored, and his mother, who worshipped him; and, moreover, he had also the dare-devil spirit of his race; but with all this he had also a very distinct sense that Catholicism—as it is practised in old-fashioned, loyal Brittany—was a great, superb, entrancing faith, that ever opened up new perspectives, made new promises, brought to pass new and awe-inspiring surprises, including time as well as infinite space, a sort of glittering magnificence, blue and green as the world itself, yet much more mysterious!

All this is a question of temperament, and Lōic had a

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

wonderfully noble, if a very violent and authoritative one.

Throughout the day, at the great banquet, when he proposed the health of the young couple—standing upon a chair to do so—during the dancing of the *rondes* on the green turf to the tune of the shrill, barbaric *Bignious*, while between the bride and groom he jumped and stamped his little feet in perfect measure with the interminable circle of couples linked hand-in-hand, Lõic was the cynosure of admiring eyes.

Backward and forward, balancing, jumping, singing the refrain of the long gavotte at the top of his lungs, he yielded to the intoxication of the moment, true to his rhythm, remarkable in the free grace of his every gesture, his curly head erect, his cheeks deliciously flushed, his trim little figure always picturesquely poised, he would have gone on like that for twenty-four hours at a stretch, and was exceedingly wroth when summoned away to rest himself before attending—as would be his duty later on—the home-going of the bride.

Indeed, Kadoc did not escape a fierce attack and a storm of reproaches when he arrived to escort him from the *Grande Place* where the dances were in progress.

"Why can't I stay with them till supper-time?" he demanded, furiously, as they turned into a narrow green lane skirting the wall of the lower park.

Kadoc shrugged his broad shoulders and smiled. "It is all very well for you to be among them as long as they are sober," he replied, dryly, "but you know as well as I do, *Monsieur le Marquis*"—intentional stress was put on the respectful and impressive appellation seldom used as yet towards the child—"that when they begin to drink hard, they are no longer fit company for you, although still frank and good Bretons!"

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

Monsieur le Marquis turned towards Kadoc aggressively, his hands on his hips, his eyes shining like stars in the fast-gathering twilight.

"Suppose you hold your tongue, *Maitre Kadoc!*" he cried. "My Bretons are always fit company for me, and I am as safe with them when they are drunk as when they are sober. It is you with your nonsense-*tales* who have made *mamma* keep *Gaidik* away from the dance, I'd wager, and that's enough harm done for one day! Oh! you need not frown; I am not afraid of you, *Monsieur Croquemitaine!*"

At that moment the angry boy's tirade was interrupted by a violent, snarling sound proceeding from the broad ditch at the foot of the wall, where two excessively drunken men, awakened from their slumbers by *Löic's* shrill tones, had instantly grappled with each other, and were rolling over and over in the shadow, cursing abominably, and filling the calm evening air with a torrent of ugly and extremely personal invective.

Löic stopped short; then, before Kadoc could grasp his intention, he ran swiftly to the tangled-up fighters and literally fell upon them tooth and nail, beating the amazed and terrified men on the face and head with his tiny, doubled-up fist, kicking them lustily with his little yellow slippers, all this with a dangerous gleam in his eyes, and repeated promises to break their stubborn heads for them if they did not instantly go home and behave themselves, delivered in a tone which nearly capsized Kadoc's gravity, and magically sobered up the combatants for the time being.

"You must be pretty drunk, you brutes, if you make me speak twice! What! is it you *Hoël*, and you *Arch'an*, who dare to disobey my orders?"

The men slowly got up abashed and unsteady, gazing

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

stupidly at their small lord, who was holding his ground superbly.

Kadoc, silent and motionless, towered behind him on guard, but he was anxious to let him fall back as much as possible on his own resources and pluck, since the lesson would, he thought, be a salutary one for all parties concerned.

"Do you hear me?" the little fellow continued, scowling at the two sullen, obstinate faces before him. "Go home and try to keep quiet! It is only right that I should be fetched home if that is the way you behave, you *Map Kagnez!* (sons of dogs). And I who was just scolding Kadoc for saying that you are a drunken, foul-mouthed tribe! But he's right; you truly are a set of murdering ruffians as soon as you drink brandy! *Sacrées canailles, Va!* he concluded, stamping his foot contemptuously; then with an after-thought he added: "It's a jolly good thing Gäidik was not there after all! Nice language for a woman to hear!"

Kadoc chuckled inaudibly from the deepening shadows, delighted that his recent harangue should have received such immediate confirmation.

"Kadoc's speaking against us, is he?" roared Hoël, suddenly advancing in fantastic zigzags, and edging towards the tall *Garde du Corps*, who now swiftly stepped forward and stood beside Lëic.

"None of that, men!" he said, quietly, his voice low and razor-edged. "Do as Monsieur le Marquis tells you! Go home this instant, and don't try to pick a quarrel with me, because if you do, your worthless heads will be broken in good earnest this time!" He was coldly measuring the two men with his merciless blue eyes, his powerful figure drawn up to its full gigantic height. "Go, Hoël; go, Arch'an! You'd best hurry, for my patience

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

is very nearly at an end," he concluded, bringing his fierce face on a level with theirs.

Kadoc was greatly feared, and so merely growling out a parting round of maledictions, the two brawlers, magically reconciled by a common misfortune, stumbled off, fraternally supporting each other, their brandy-soaked, excited voices dying suddenly away as they turned an angle of the wall.

The purple Breton gloaming, musical with the twitter of drowsy birds, gave one a sense of great spaces and depths. Behind the machicolations and bastions of the park, squirrels seeking their mossy nests scampered upon the rough bark of the trees; sometimes a twig snapped or an acorn or pine-cone fell noisily upon the sanded paths, and beyond the great masses of dark verdure overtopping the wall, the last glow of the sunset had faded to the exact hue of an unripe orange, quaintly streaked with warm amethyst.

"Kadoc," began Lōic, in somewhat quivering tones, "you were right, they are nasty when they are drunk, and—and—I am sorry to have spoken rudely to you!"

"It was nothing, nothing at all!" the big sailor muttered, abruptly, although his heart was touched by the winning, easy repentance of the boy he loved. "It is not worth talking about, Monsieur Lōic; you never mean what you say when you are in a passion, and, moreover, I know you too well to take offence at your scoldings, *mon p'tit gars*.

Lōic nodded acquiescently, but was evidently perplexed.

"Kadoc!" he cried, pausing in the middle of the path and looking up at the grim face of his escort with round, questioning eyes. "I am a Breton, too—a true Breton! Will I also get drunk when I grow up, and fight like that

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

—not that I would mind the fighting, though," he added, truculently.

"You forget that you are a *Gentilhomme*, a *Grand Seigneur*," said Kadoc, sternly. "You are not a poor *Saulnier* whose only pleasure in life is to make a beast of himself on fête-days. You come from a great race of soldiers and brave sailors, that's why you like to fight"—this with an imperceptible tremor of the corners of his mouth—"but get drunk, no! no! my little lord, you are too much like your father, God rest his soul!"—he crossed himself devoutly—"ever to do anything really bad like that. I promised my dear master on his death-bed to care for you and make you walk straight, and you can trust me to keep my word." Kadoc's face had now softened into a gentle, yearning smile of remembrance, and Lœic slipped a little, caressing hand into his humble friend's big, hard palm, which closed with rough tenderness around it.

"I am glad not to be obliged to drink because I am a Breton," he said, naïvely content, "for a Breton I want to remain always. I am not a Frenchman, am I, Kadoc? Just a Breton, like you! I hate Frenchmen!"

Kadoc's brawny hand trembled a little, he grew slightly pale beneath his copper-hued tan. "No, Monsieur Lœic, thank God you are not a Frenchman; you are a true-hearted *Vretoned pennou kalled* (hard-headed Breton); there is nothing mean or sneaking, fickle or unsteady about you. You are a Royalist, a Catholic, an Aristocrat—the Saints be praised!—and you will be one day our Chief and our Lord—we of the old Chouan blood, white to the core of our souls, not white and blue and red, mind you, like the French!"

Never had Lœic heard so long a tirade from his severe, silent retainer, and he was as much awed and impressed

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

as it was in his dauntless little nature to be. His usual laughing insolence and brilliant, buoyant chatter were quenched for the moment, and he remained quite speechless during the rest of the walk.

When they reached the castle, however, he stopped once more, brusquely, and gazing down from the broad northern terrace at the tall, barren cliffs curving away on both sides above liquid depths of gold and purple and shining green—a splendor of color sometimes seen after sunset on that grim coast—he deeply breathed in once or twice the pure, cool breeze blowing from the sea, and said, quite solemnly and simply:

“Oh yes! I will be a Breton for always and always!”

And Kadoc answered fervently, “*Amen!*”

CHAPTER IV

Three oceans, one of moonlight's widest flow,
One, shuddering blackness 'neath the balcony—
The tower's, the cliff's vast shadow—far below
Rolled the Biscayan Sea. M. M.

THERE was a big crowd gathered on the *Grande Place* of Kergoat that night, standing in groups under the broad, star-studded sky, awaiting the moment to accompany the bridal pair to their new home, a pretty little cottage beyond the church on the road to Plouharzàl. Here and there the gleam of a lantern flickered on the gold and silver embroideries of the rich costumes, and from the wide-open door of the inn a broad band of cheerful red and orange light streamed forth upon the bagpipe players, still relentlessly blowing in their enormously distended *Bignious*.

The whole village had always been in full sympathy with the young couple, and no tinge of jealousy was aroused by their superior prosperity; so all had come with one accord, laying work and personal affairs cheerfully aside, to foregather at their wedding and agree among themselves, cordially and with many oaths, fierce-sounding, but benevolent in intention, that the union was a most commendable and satisfactory one, destined to reflect immense credit upon the whole country-side.

Of course, many of the men were now quite drunk. Talking is thirsty work, so is dancing, and, moreover, it is usual in Brittany to interrupt such agreeable toil

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

every half-hour or so on festive occasions, in order to drink great bowlfuls of cider or *demi setiers* of apple brandy in honor of the day. So far, however, drunkenness had not gone beyond what perfect seemliness and *Paludier* etiquette demand, and although there had been a few scuffles, even one or two more serious fights, the rowdies had been sent home bleeding and satisfied, and those who remained were still capable of perfect decorum and polite behavior. Meanwhile the moon had risen above the cork-oak forest at the back of the village and was shining radiantly, turning the gray cliffs into alternate blocks of silver and black marble, according to where its idealizing rays fell.

In the offing a score of fishing-boats seemed fastened to the water by the long, golden nails reflected from their tiny, flaming fire-pots, while close to the church the white *coiffes* of many women gleamed, their figures indistinct, but their voices very young and real as they chatted light-heartedly, sitting on the mossy steps of the Calvary, or, with characteristic insouciance born of long habit, upon the low wall of the cemetery. Breton women have singularly pretty and melodious voices, delicious to hear in the evening above the monotonous murmur of the sea. Suddenly there was a noisy shuffling of feet, an eloquent pause, and L^oic, accompanied by Kadoc, appeared on the scene with all the *brio* and suddenness of a *coup de théâtre*. The boy, amazingly tall and strong for his age, had a laughing, excited look in his eyes. Flushed, brilliant, handsome, the light from the inn door falling broadly upon him, he stood for a moment with uncovered head bowing right and left to his people, while shouts of "*Vive Monsieur le Marquis, Vive Monseigneur!*" fairly rent the air.

Truly this was a proud moment, and he was too much

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

impressed with the dignity of his rôle to laugh at the deafening noise, as he would undoubtedly have done in former days. On the contrary, he bore himself with a grave urbanity never before observed in him, his spirit mounting to the exalted occasion when, for the first time in his short life, he was appearing in his character of Lord of the Manor.

"*Devès mat dor'ch!*" (good-evening), he said, when he at last could make himself heard. "I am here, you see, *mes enfants*, to lead Jeannik home!" which statement aroused another tempest of appreciative hurrahs, this time hardly to be subdued.

Under the great stone-pine on the edge of the *Place* the wedding cortège was being formed, the *Sonneurs de Bignious*, rather unsteady on their gaitered legs, industriously and somewhat ineffectually attempting to mark time while the guests, amid merriment and confusion, slowly assembled behind them in double file. Everybody was in brilliant spirits, and when Lōic, holding Jeannik by the hand, placed himself at the head of the procession, there was a thunder of applause, followed by the sacramental first lines of the *Chant du Départ*:

*"Petra gan
Al lapouzik war al lan?"*
(What does the eagle sing on the Landes?)

which were lustily intoned by the four groomsmen, the bagpipes having been silenced with difficulty.

"Gan haf gan he'vignonés!"
(He sings and carols of his love!)

sang back Lōic, as it was his duty to do.

"What awaits the eaglet in his nest?"

carolled the groomsmen.

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

"His love awaits him in his nest,"

answered Lōic, standing very straight, shoulders squared and head erect, singing with all his might.

"Who will lead his love to him?"

came the query.

"Your Seigneur will lead her to him,"

echoed Lōic, proudly.

"God bless our Seigneur and the love he brings with him!"

roared the whole assembly, loudly accompanied by the bagpipes, who, set free by their laughing oppressors, now brayed forth again, somewhat discordantly, it is true, but with immense good-will, as *Marquis en tête* the cortège started briskly towards the bridal home.

It was good to have once more a Seigneur to lead the bride, a handsome little Seigneur, too, who seemed destined to uphold the traditions of his race right gallantly, and the people were indeed well pleased, for until now they had noticed little else in their future Chieftain save his traditional good looks and his ineradicable love for mischief and dare-deviltry. Yes, yes, surely this was a great day!

A wedding ceremony in far-off Finisterre is still accompanied by the semi-barbaric customs of ancient times, customs which are unique in their vigorous local color and have a *cachet* of originality quite apart from any others in the universe, for there have been no pauses in the observance of Breton rites since the very infancy of that rugged race, and Lōic was for the first time to witness in *almost* all its peculiarities the chiefest and quaintest

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

of them all, a thoroughly old-fashioned *mariage de Paludiers*.

Gayly the noisy band wended its way along the queer, steep, narrow, moonlit road, bordered with thatch-roofed houses flanked here and there by tall, gaunt stone crucifixes worn by rain and storm to a lovely shade of pale, greenish-gray, or primitively carved images of Saints, now grotesquely and pathetically disfigured with age, some lacking a nose, others deprived of an arm or a foot, but in spite of these regrettable deficiencies borrowing from their picturesque surroundings, and from the soft brilliance of the Queen of Night, an indescribable poetry of aspect.

The *Chapelouse* wreathed hats, the rich old embroideries in silver and blue, in gold and scarlet and green, the snowy *coiffes* fluttering in the freshening breeze, the prancing musicians with their beribboned *Bignious*, the blushing, shy, yet saucy little bride holding tightly in her own the small, firm hand of the small Marquis, made up a deliciously embodied vision of long ago, which few sights indeed could have equalled.

At last Hervé's cottage was reached, and the long train disbanded, clustering about the door to witness the bride and groom's formal entry into their new domain. On the threshold Lóic paused, as he had been told to do, kissed Jeannik on both cheeks—standing on tiptoe to do so—vigorously shook hands with the young husband, patting him on the arm with a paternal dignity, comical in its sincere earnestness, and then stepped back to where Kadoc was waiting for him, while the bride and her four bridesmaids, the groom with his four groomsmen, Mother Corentine and Hervé's father and mother entered, closing and bolting the door behind them.

"Why can't I go in, too?" asked Lóic, staring at the

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

stout oak panel now separating him from his friend Hervé.

"Because it is not the custom, Monsieur Lôic," replied the wily *Garde du Corps*, unwilling to spoil the child's new-born seigneurial pride by confessing that an older Seigneur would not have been excluded from the extraordinary rites now going on inside. "But watch now and listen," he continued, "for soon they will let go the pigeons, and the *Chanson de la Mariée* is well worth hearing."

Lôic opened his eyes to their widest extent. "The pigeons!" he whispered, annoyed at his ignorance—"what pigeons, Kadoc?"

"Hush," murmured Kadoc, "look at that little round loop-hole below the roof; that's where they are coming from"; and lifting the boy onto the rough, low wall of the little garden, he stood beside him, perchance quite as much amused and expectant as his young Lord, for there is something of the eternal child beneath the cold, dignified exterior of every Breton.

Within the house, built of upright blocks of granite like the ancient Druidic menhirs and cromlechs scattered on the *Landes* near by, absolute silence reigned. In the enormous stone fireplace a pile of turf was smouldering rosily, and on the heavy table one rosin-candle in a tall, copper holder dimly burned. The well-beaten earthen floor was as clean as if made of polished wood, and in the deeper gloom of the chimney-corner the great *lit-clos* was just discernible, its carved, fretted doors wide open, its crimson-bordered green serge curtains drawn back, its coarse sheets and pillows as invitingly white as newly bleached flax. In one corner stood the silver locked and hinged *Bahut*, in the other an oaken bench was flanked by a large spinning-wheel made of rich, dark mahogany,

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

and right behind the door was the broad *vaissellier*, the pride of every Breton housekeeper, gay with crudely painted plates, dishes, and cups.

A very sumptuous interior that for Brittany, the grandeur of which was further enhanced by the superb silver crucifix presented by Lôic to his "daughter" Jeannik, and which now hung above the lofty mantel-piece, adorned by a branch of thrice-blessed box-tree.

Before the bed the women closed in around Jeannik; before the bench on the farther side of the big, square room the men formed a similar hedge around Hervé, and the official undressing began.

Slowly, solemnly, the beautiful garments were removed, the bridal coronal unfastened, the jewels unpinned. Not a word was spoken, not a sound heard, save the rustle of the heavy brocades, the slight *frou-frou* of the lace *coiffe* and kerchief, the creaking of Hervé's fine, new, canary-hued shoes and wide, silver-buckled leathern belt, until all this outer finery was carefully laid aside; then the trembling voice of Mère Corentine commanded, "Blow out the candle," and in almost pitchy darkness the rest of the double toilet was continued.

Stripped by their respective entourage of their gorgeous wedding costumes, the bride and groom were clad anew in ordinary Sunday clothes, still silently, and more by guesswork than otherwise, for the turf fire scarcely emitted a glow sufficient to permit of those many pairs of eyes being brought into play, but everything had been meticulously prepared in advance, and there was no confusion.

When once again the two young people were dressed from head to foot, all excepting the new *sabots* ranged side by side on the hearth-stone, the bridesmaids and

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

groomsmen fell back, and the bridegroom, led by his father, walked towards the bed where the little bride had been laid upon the brilliant counterpane, her small, brown hands crossed over her breast, her tiny, stockinged feet stiffly extended like those of a granite Saint on a tombstone. Quietly, deliberately, and without the faintest *souçon* of false shame, the young man took his place beside her, also quite straight on his back with his hands crossed like a carven effigy.

For a minute or so longer a profound silence reigned, then the old father commanded, in his turn, "Light the candle," which was instantly done by one of the youths dipping it with somewhat spluttering results in the hottest part of the dully burning embers.

Silently, also, the company filed out, the mother remaining to the last in order to put in her new son-in-law's hand the tiny silver loving-cup filled to the brim with hot spiced-wine, which it is the custom that the groom should share with his bride as soon as they are left alone. Also Mother Corentine opened with a quick, deft movement the gate of a large wicker-cage containing two white pigeons, placed in readiness on the narrow window-sill, then with a murmured blessing she departed.

Nothing can give an idea of the tact and delicacy with which all this was done; there was not an unseemly joke, not a single giggle nor embarrassing gesture. Tradition willed things to be thus accomplished, that was all. There was nothing extraordinary or shocking about it to these simple, decorous souls.

As soon as the door of the little house once more closed behind the *Cercle d'Honneur*—as those intrusted with the undressing of bride and groom are designated—six young men and women, especially selected for their fine singing, ranged themselves in a semicircle before it,



MÈRE CORENTINE

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

and intoned a monotonous chant which may be roughly rendered from the Bas-Breton as follows:

"Are you snug in bed, Madame la Mariée?
Are you happy in your new nest, we pray?
Are you content with your Fate to-day?"

As the deep, harmonious voices ceased there was a momentary pause, and then:

"I am snug in bed as I can be,
And my heart's love is there with me,
Together under our own roof-tree,"

Jeannik sang from within, her voice rising almost ethereally clear and unreal from the half-open *lucarne* beneath the thatch.

"Then of your joy, Madame la Mariée,
A token send to us we pray,
That we may know if truth you say!"

sang the lads and maidens lustily.

At that precise moment there was a brusque whirl of fluttering wings, and a couple of dazzlingly white doves flew out of the round loop-hole, hesitated a second in midair, and then, with a silky rustle of their shimmering pinions, sped away in the purple and silver night, where they soon disappeared like flakes of drifting snow.

Lôic gave a shout of delight, and clapped his hands enthusiastically.

"Oh, Kadoc, did you see the pigeons? Weren't they beautiful?" he cried, almost drowning the gay voices of the singers loudly expressing their gratification at so gracious a token:

"Oh, thanks, oh, thanks, Madame la Mariée!
We are convinced! Come now, be gay!
And with us dance and sing, we pray!"

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

"Hush," whispered Kadoc, and from behind the door Jeannik's voice rang out anew:

"Once as a girl I could have come,
But now my heart's no longer mine;
A wife, I must abide at home,
Nor join with you the laughing line.

"A wife must bake and spread the board,
Her hearth-stone she must sweep, and bring
All things in readiness for her lord;
No longer can I dance and sing."

At which lamentable statement all the lads and maidens extended their arms widely, threw them back in token of deep desolation, and finally let them slowly fall with a wail of piercing chagrin, to which the bag-pipes contributed a wheeze of intensest and weirdest melancholy. Then followed many verses of alternate entreaty and denial, the singers depicting the joys of youth and festivity, Jeannik enumerating a housewife's multitudinous detaining cares and duties in a mournful catalogue, until suddenly:

"Come in and fetch her, friends, and see
' Whether I'm as black as she's painted me!"

sang Hervé, his fine, sonorous voice booming forth with great effect, for the singers instantly rushed at the door, and, followed by a laughing *cohue* of guests, invaded the cottage—as many of them as it would hold—where Jeannik and Hervé still lay side by side like two carven effigies on the red-and-green counterpane.

"Let us go, too, Kadoc!" shrieked Lôic, struggling violently; "what do you mean by holding me back?" But Kadoc could not allow him to be jostled in such a *mêlée*, and a scene would doubtless have followed regretably imperilling the seigneurial dignity had not Hervé

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

stepped out at that moment, his laughing eyes brimming with fun, and, hoisting the little Chieftain on his shoulder, exclaimed:

"Come, Monsieur le Marquis, we will take you back to the castle."

Suiting the action to the words, he sprang forward, pushing and elbowing his way through the dense ranks of his guests, who, after some confusion, reformed in a double line behind him to the completely reawakened and indefatigable music of the *Bignious* and the loud hurrahs and *vivats* of the enchanted spectators.

On they clattered towards the castle, past the meadows where the home-farm cattle slept luxuriously in the deep clover and rich, long grass, their breath odorous on the night air; past the placid lake alive with wide-awake frogs gravely sitting among the sword-rushes and the dock-leaves, and croaking a welcome of their own solemn composing; past the black hazel coppice fragrant with primroses and violets; past the huge, old oaks beneath which the deer came every afternoon to be fed, and finally reached the drawbridge which they crossed to enter the *Cour d'Honneur*.

With its tall louvers, its massive battlemented towers, its endless rows of Gothic balconies, its marvellously delicate stone traceries, the great building looked extraordinarily imposing in the moonlight which silvered all the antique painted panes of its lancet windows. It invoked, indeed, the days when great Nobles

"Built royallie
Their mansions curioslie,
With turrets and with towres
With halls and with bowres,
Hanging about their walles,
Clothes of gold and palles,
Arras of rich arraye
Fresh as flowers of Maye!"

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

On the wide *Perron* stood the Marquise de Kergoat, her long train carelessly caught over one arm, in a shower of perfumed black laces, which surrounded her with dusky billowy clouds, starred by a multitude of diamonds. Behind her, through the great, open doors, the immense hall, with its dim splendor of purple and gold, its gleam of armor, and the rosy glow of lamps suffusing the double flight of stairs that swept upward on either side of a flower-filled onyx fountain, made a sumptuous background.

Beside her was Gäidik, her tawny mane falling far below her waist, her eyes dancing with excitement as the gay procession approached, for she keenly appreciated the pageant of delicious color that streamed from a thousand points of this beautiful night scene, and she stepped forward in the shadow of some broad-leaved Mexican plants which adorned the balustrade, her whole small being quivering with delight as Hervé swiftly advanced, bent the knee to allow Lœic to slide from his shoulder at the Marquise's feet, and then drew back to where his blushing little wife was awaiting him.

Immediately Madame de Kergoat smilingly descended towards them, complimenting the happy young couple with a caressing gentleness of which she had the secret and which was not one of her least dangerous weapons. She spoke, moreover, in fullest sincerity, for she liked her "vassals," and realizing, moreover, that the rôle of Chate-laine suited her exceedingly well, she always carried it to the highest point of perfection whenever occasion presented itself.

To-night she was openly, visibly, unmistakably delighted, and looked the very incarnation of what one's most golden and treasured fancies of a great lady are, and yet all her grace, all her exquisite art, never aroused

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

in those peasants the adoration they had felt for their dead Marquis, and the love with which their hearts were filled for his orphaned children. Their own fathers had lived from generation to generation under the kindly rule of a Kergoat, and the service they had given their masters had always been accorded with a loving loyalty, a thoroughly feudal allegiance, and a singularly beautiful pride in belonging body and soul, as it were, to those thorough-paced Grand Seigneurs, who, one and all, were born with that nameless gift of insensibly and without effort attracting deep personal attachment—rare temperaments which vanquished hatred as the sun melts snow.

Lôic, marching about beside his mother from one group to another, still displayed a flow of inimitable nonsense and an effervescence of animal spirits so mirthful and contagious that the most *blasé* audience would have been laughed into irresistible good-humor, while Gaidik, for once as merry as himself, chatted freely and unconstrainedly.

That night lived long in her memory, and when at length the interminable line of wedding guests had vanished, after a vigorous rendering of the ancient song in honor of their liege Lord and Lady which is reserved for such occasions, and the dreamy light of the moon was left in sole possession of the *Cour d'Honneur*, she walked upstairs to her room like one roused suddenly from the vision of some splendid fairy pageant, and the quick ear of Lôic, sauntering after her, caught the sound of a repressed sigh.

Half an hour later, wrapped in a long white garment of filmy tissues, which made her look quite ghostlike, the little girl was standing on her balcony, which overhung the sea, at the northwestern extremity of the castle. The whole magnificent view appeared as if a thin web of

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

silver had been cast over it, pale and dim in the shadows, but still reflecting the diffused moonlight. Behind her the thick mantle of ivy clothing the carven wall, and capriciously twining in and out of delicately fretted balusters and projections, shone black as polished onyx, and below was depth upon depth of velvet darkness, edged out beyond the cliff-shade by the glint of waves. Bats were wheeling about, coming up silently and swiftly out of the transparent obscurity, slanting towards the radiance of the moon, wherein they madly circled for a few minutes at a time like sombre butterflies of gigantic size, then sweeping away into the darkness again as if dazzled by so much brilliancy, till presently the process would recommence *da-capo!*

Suddenly two little loving arms were clasped about Gäidik's neck, and a childish voice whispered in her ear:

"I could not sleep, Gäid, before making sure that you are not unhappy, so as soon as Yves" (Yves was his valet) "had finished tucking me into bed I crept out again, and here I am."

The bell in the castle tower was tolling out twelve solemn strokes, and the children looked surprisedly at each other, for this was an hour when they invariably lay asleep in their little beds.

"Oh-h-h!" said Gäidik, a long drawn "oh" of amazement. "What would mamma say if she knew that we were out here?"

"Say! She would scold us, especially you, as usual! But never mind, Gäid, she cannot hear us from here, and I *must* be with you a little while, for I have hardly seen you all day long."

Gäidik gave an energetic gesture of affirmation and consent. She was overjoyed to have her darling near her again at last, and they both sat down on a narrow

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

stone bench clamped to the inner side of the balustrade. Gäidik's pale little face was paler than usual, her big, gray eyes were graver even than was their wont, but she nodded her head slowly and contentedly at her brother, as she curled herself up on the hard, uncomfortable seat and drew him close to her.

"Why did you think that I was unhappy?" she said at last, curiously. "Surely I was gay enough this evening."

"Yes, but you sighed a tremendous big sigh as we went up-stairs, and you did not eat any dinner—not that much." Lōic measured half an inch on his dimpled thumb. "So I am sure-certain that you have been scolded, or punished, or something." He clinched his little fist and shook it threateningly, vehemently, while his eyes flashed fiercely.

"I wish I was really grown up, not just making believe, like to-day! I would soon defend you and protect you then, instead of standing by like a lump, even when you are punished instead of me."

"Nonsense, Lōic!" Gäidik exclaimed, drawing him towards her and hugging him tightly. "Do you think I mind being punished for you? And you are much too quick in taking my part as it is! It only makes things worse—besides you are my own Lōic, and as long as I have you, I do not care a bit what else happens." She gazed fixedly at the tossing waters below, the murmuring, dancing, restless waters, shot with seams and cleavages of light where the moonrays fell off in a ragged fringe from the broad, silvered path reaching from horizon to shore. A bat crossed in front of the balcony, flew round and round almost within touch, and then disappeared again in the shadow.

"Sh-h!" whispered Lōic, with an admonitory gesture.

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

He stole a wary glance round about, and then, with unaccustomed solemnity:

"Did you see that bat?" he asked. "He looked at us right knowingly with his beady little eyes. Well, he was sent by the devil to listen to what we were saying. The middle of the night, Gäid, is the devil's noon, and nobody is ever awake in the middle of the night excepting wicked people, so you should be asleep; but I—it is quite natural that I should be awake, and it is for me that the devil's servant came. I wish he hadn't looked at you, though."

"Mercy on us, Lôic, what are you talking about? Why, you are not wicked, you are never wicked, and I will not have you say that you are!"

"Why? One cannot help being wicked if one is born wicked, no more than one can help being a bat or a toad if one is born one, and perhaps that very bat was praying that he might be changed into something else! I know that I was born wicked—old Malghorn says that some day I'm sure to be changed into stone for my sins, like the bad Monk of Plouhar'zalec—and that my soul will burn in hell for ever and ever." Lôic concluded, evidently contemplating the possibility of so awful a doom without the slightest fear, his slippered feet crossed, his curly head lolling back against his sister's encircling arm.

On the silence that succeeded there came a low laugh from Gäidik—the laugh of amused incredulity.

"*Petit Nigaud!*" she said, with decision, "you should not listen to old Malghorn. He is a devil's servant himself, a wizard, a *Baz dotu*, and no Breton at all. Don't you know that he is a gypsy, found ever so many years ago under a hedge in the big road ditch?"

Malghorn was a tall, thin, black-haired, hawk-nosed, fierce-looking man with a pair of cruel lips, and powerful

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

jaws which he never opened save to say something unpleasant, but then one must do him the justice to say that he opened them to some purpose, bursting forth in a wild gush of words, malicious, threatening, and calculated to arouse terror in the breasts of his hearers. On Sunday, clad in heavy broadcloth, he looked—when one did not examine him too closely—like an eminently respectable grazier, but when working in the orchard—which was his vocation at Kergöat—with a sharp pruning-knife stuck in his belt, and a ragged hat on his uncombed head, he became a rather formidable and altogether un-reassuring figure. Some time after her husband's death Madame de Kergöat had deigned to engage this tall, bony, haggard individual, who was certainly an excellent workman, and according to his fellow-servants was acquainted with supernatural secrets regarding the culture of fruit-trees, secrets doubtless obtained through some compact with his Satanic Majesty. Also, he was accused of being a *Jeteur de Sorts* (caster of spells), and went by the sobriquet of *Ar-Zod* (the madman).

"He says," continued Löic, gravely, "that he can hear the grass grow, the plants shoot up, and the trees stretch themselves and murmur awful secrets to one another at night, and of course he may, because he is always prowling round the menhirs after dark, where he dances with the kourrigans."

Gäidik lifted her shoulders in emphatic repudiation of Malghorn's whole paltry bag of tricks. "No fear of a wicked old beast like him being so privileged," she said, contemptuously. "Fancy his dancing with the dear little kourrigans! I would not have thought you silly enough to believe such a story, Löic! Now, good people, who are very pure and do no harm to any one, can see shapes and hear voices miles and miles away. When

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

they sleep their souls go far, far, at the back of the north-wind, to distant countries ever so beautiful, filled with flowers and birds and delicious music. I always wish I could be like that. You see, Löic, I seem to feel that my body is not the real me; it is my soul that's me, and if I could only be good, and not fly in a passion, and all that, I'm sure I could go during my sleep to that lovely place where everything is so splendid. I don't mean Heaven, you know!"

"But you are good, Gäidik! You are the very bestest best in the whole world, and I think you are not at all like other people. They say in the village that you are a white witch because you do good to sick folks when you touch them, and whatever you plant in your garden grows, even sticks! Do you remember that little cane of mine that you stuck in among your cockle-shells and which sprouted out a lot of green leaves?"

"Bah! that was a willow-wand, so there's nothing astonishing about that. But there are some people who can be seen in two places at the same minute. Keinek was seen walking through the park here before he died on his frigate in China."

"That was only his ghost," interrupted Löic, quite simply and sincerely.

"No, no, not his ghost! I heard Uncle Pierre tell mamma that it was several days before he did die that he was seen, wandering under the trees, crying bitterly. So you see! He was a good, good man, Keinek, not a beast like Malghorn, who is not a *callet deusan Armorik* (hard, or true man of Brittany), but just a dirty gypsy, a regular *Teuss' Arpoulièk* (three-headed devil), who shows different faces to each different person he speaks to."

Löic stole another wary glance about. "Oh!" he said,

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

carelessly, "everybody knows that, I have known it for years, but what only I know is that he spies upon us and tells tales to mamma about everything we do."

"What!" cried Gäidik, sitting up so alertly that she almost tumbled Lõic from the bench; "a traitor, is he?"—she spoke in accents of huge disdain—"a traitor? Well, let me catch him at it and I will give him such a thrashing—you'll help me, won't you, Lõic—that he'll never do so again, of that you may be certain." Her lips were parted, her big eyes two menacing points of fire, her whole tiny person eager for the fray, as it was the nature of those terrible little Kergöat children to be on the slightest provocation. Lõic was instantly all aglow with impatience to witness the discomfiture of his enemy, never doubting that his sister and he would retire from the encounter with flying colors.

"Yes," he said, with a quick little shake of the head, and speaking with great animation, "we will thrash him to within an inch of his life, the sneak! He pretends not to be afraid of us because I am so little yet, and you are a girl."

"A girl? Me? How dare he call me that!" cried Gäidik, in a red fury of wrath. "Won't I box his ears for him, though."

Lõic laughed, his rosy face bright above the low collar of his pink pajama jacket. "I knew that would fetch you," he confessed, modestly proud of this successful bit of diplomacy.

"Did you ever hear him putting mamma up against us?" questioned Gäidik, who felt a sort of morbid interest in what the future held in reserve for her.

Lõic meditated profoundly. Then he declared, decisively: "Yes, I did, one, two, no—three days ago. Mamma bullied you and sent you home, don't you re-

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

member? Well, he, Malghorn, had been talking to her in the orchard, and I had heard him speak of 'Mam'zelle Gäidik' and the apricots—those we climbed in the tree for, it must have been—and after you left he winked at me and seemed to crow over your being punished. Mamma is cruel unkind to you, Gäid, all the time, but she was fierce that day; she said you led me into mischief, though it was you who climbed highest for the apricots I wanted. I think that was very wrong! When I'm a man, Gäidik, you'll have everything you want, and never a single scolding!"

"How many times must I tell you that I don't mind mamma's scoldings?" said Gäidik, with her chin in the air; "but I cannot stand still when she punishes you. I always feel as if I could kill anybody who beats you," she continued, almost in a whisper, but with tragic intensity, her face growing very dark and her lips trembling. "Don't set her back up, Lõic. I can't endure it. I really, really can't!"

"Bah!" the child answered, with the superiority of a sage, "she's never long angry with me; but when it's with you it lasts a dreadful long while, for ever and ever and ever, which is awful unjust!" His tone was very impressive, and he spoke as if he had a thousand years' experience behind him. Then he yawned, opening his sweet little mouth as wide as it would go.

"Oh, Lõic, you are sleepy, my poor little dear! We must go to bed now."

"I'm not sleepy at all," stoutly denied Lõic, sitting cross-legged beside her, "not the least little bit, and I don't want to go to bed yet!"

Gäidik laughed, showing her pretty, white teeth, and both subsided after this conscientious protest into drowsy silence.

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

"Do you think, Gäid, that animals have souls?" the boy after a few minutes demanded, sleepily.

"Why, yes, of course they have souls! Can't you see them shining through the eyes of the dogs when they lay their heads on our laps and look at us deep, deep; and don't you know how horses understand all one says to them?"

"They understand you and me, but not the grooms; not nearly as well, that is!"

"Oh, but it's because the grooms don't know how to make themselves understood, and speak to them as if they were all brutes together! But now, do go to bed, Lõic, darling—please do!"

"No, Gäidik, I'm so jolly comfy here! Let me stay a little longer!" he pleaded, his head gradually nestling more closely against his sister's shoulder, that curved itself into a pillow for him. Another long silence ensued, and gradually, before they knew it, in utter weariness they dropped asleep locked in each other's arms, beneath the smiling moon.

The minutes of the warm spring night slid into hours, but on they slept as peacefully as if stretched at full length in their dainty beds, Gäidik's long hair drooping like a veil over her little pet's face and arms, her head resting quite easily against the balustrade, in one of those graceful poses which children unconsciously adopt.

In the distance the first noises of awakening farmyards and near by the twittering of birds began at length to be heard, the great castle clock registered the passing hours melodiously, but nothing roused them, and a prettier group than those two slumbering little ones would have been difficult to find anywhere.

Suddenly Lõic gave a start and jumped up. "Oh," he cried, "my foot is asleep ever so badly, and so's my shoulder!"

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

"And so were you, too!" Gäidik replied, almost instantly awake, and bending down to rub the offending member. "We've been fast asleep ever so long! Why, the moon's gone, and see, it's getting pink, away off there in the sky, pink and lilac and yellow like the bed of anemones by the gate! It must be the sun rising! Do you think it can be the sun, Lõic?"

"It must be," murmured Lõic, dubiously, rubbing his eyes wherein the sand-man was still doing sad havoc. "What time is it, Gäid?"

Gäidik shrugged her shoulders in ignorance. All notion of so unimportant a thing as time had slipped away from her, and never having as yet watched the first faint streaks of dawn, she could not say that the short night was undoubtedly drawing to an end. So they both peered over the balcony ledge down through many fathoms of dim space, now deserted by the moon-beams, at the water, across which was drawn a faint veil of opaline mist.

Suddenly Gäidik gave a little cry of delight as she caught sight of a score of big gulls, lazily circling about beneath them half-way down the face of the cliff.

"Lõic! Lõic!" she cried. "See! the gulls are awake, too, it must be day! Look, look, they have seen us and want to be fed!" She laughed aloud in her joy, and truly the birds seemed to have heard her and understood, for they wheeled, made a curving swoop upward past the rows of tightly shuttered windows below, and rose triumphantly to the airy level of the balcony.

Gäidik's gulls—as they were called at Kergöat—were most astonishingly tame, and flocked quite fearlessly around this corbelled ledge, where she had accustomed them to come and be luxuriously regaled. This morning they were almost as silvery gray as the delicate mist

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

they traversed at full speed, uttering their shrill view-halloos.

Quick as a flash Gäidik had brought an ever well-filled basket from her room, and the great white and gray *Mauves*, dodging and flapping their satiny pinions in excited confusion, closed in around her, catching coveted morsels from her very hands, held temptingly out to them. Now and again one of them would detach itself from the flock and dart after a crumb of that royal feast, surreptitiously thrown by Lóic into the air. The scene was delicious, and the motions of Gäidik's arms were singularly beautiful in their perfect unconstraint and complete familiarity with the ravening, fighting, sharp-beaked gluttons.

The sky was by this time serenely cloudless and of palest azure tinged with deep rose and dull gold; beneath, the sea stirred softly under some faint breeze, revealing its endless extent with shadowy indistinctness—for the fog was but slowly lifting—while about and around the balcony the now greatly augmented flock of gulls were on wing, thanks to Gäidik's shrewd strategy of issuing just enough food to keep the whirling cohort in motion.

Neither Gäidik nor Lóic were in any haste to end the fray, but at last the basket was empty, and the birds, now like the whole landscape, delicately tinted with pink, drifted down again to the water—all but two, that is, especial favorites and exceptionally audacious, that lingered behind, soared for a moment directly above Gäidik's head, poised themselves a moment one on each of her extended arms, and then, with a derisive and sadly ungrateful croak, dropped headlong into the shimmering, prismatic dimness to rejoin their brethren, already preening their unruffled plumage on the undulations of the glassy wavelets.

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

"Tell me that these gulls have no souls!" Gäidik remarked, scornfully, as though the last words of their discussion before they had fallen asleep had but just been uttered. "They are as knowing as humans—and just as greedy!" she concluded, with a laugh. "But now hurry off, Lōic, the servants will be up in a few minutes, and if ever mamma were to be told of—"

The sentence was never finished, for at that instant a small, firm, much-bejewelled hand caught the little speaker brutally by the shoulder, and Madame de Kergōat, wrapped in a hastily snatched-up *peignoir*, all lace and fluttering ribbons, stood between her children, her lovely face white with rage, her eyes flashing, her lips drawn slightly back and displaying a double row of viciously clinched white teeth.

Without a word she began violently to shake Gäidik, who, quite passive, allowed herself to be swayed to and fro without the slightest protest, accustomed as she was, poor child, to such usage. At last the Marquise spoke:

"What's the meaning of this?" she demanded, in a rasping, exasperating voice. "Do you think that you are at liberty to get up at four in the morning to feed your idiotic gulls, and, as if that were not enough, to call your poor little brother out of bed so that he may join in this senseless performance?"

Here Gäidik, who knew herself to be totally in the wrong, tried to divert the storm by offering an apology, as her honest little heart told her it was her duty to do, and explaining how matters really stood; but when once Madame de Kergōat's ire was aroused, it was impossible to make her listen to anything until she had had her say, and neither Gäidik's murmured excuses nor Lōic's deepening frowns and unconscious stamp of the foot produced the slightest impression.

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

"You abominable, heartless child!" continued the Marquise, trembling with fury. "You really must have plotted to kill your brother! But be sure of this, if ever any harm comes to him through you, I'll kill you with my own hand!"

The threat was so ridiculous and out of all proportion to the present sin, that Gäidik committed the unfortunate mistake of laughing a miserable little laugh, which, of course, was interpreted as an additional bit of insolence, deserving instant chastisement in the form of two well-directed blows which left a livid impression on each of the poor little pale cheeks.

With a yell of rage Lõic threw himself before his sister, extending his dimpled arms in energetic protest, and crying as he did so:

"Don't touch her again; do you hear, mamma? I won't have her beaten like that!" His lips were trembling, his little face was ashy white, and blue fires seemed to burst from his widely dilated eyes.

This brought matters to a climax, and Madame de Kergöat, who by now had worked herself into one of her most royal frenzies, pounced upon her much-beloved son and heir, raining blows upon him as if quite incapable of realizing what she was doing.

When at length his mother's passion had spent itself, the boy, who had not uttered a sound during this severe punishment, quietly drew himself up with a shrug of the shoulders and gazed at her with a hard, contemptuous look in his clear, childish eyes, which suddenly struck her to the heart with shame and fear. Falling upon her knees, she threw her arms about him, imploring him in the most abject terms to forgive her, and calling him by every endearing name her distress suggested to her.

The whole pitiful scene had scarcely lasted a moment,

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

but it had been too much for poor Gäidik's nerves, and as Lõic, in a fit of concentrated anger—strange in such a little fellow—thrust his mother coldly from him, she covered her quivering little face with her hands and ran from the room, while Madame de Kergöat, now quite beside herself with remorse, redoubled her entreaties, for never in his life before had Lõic been so deeply resentful and obdurate. In her anxiety she cast aside her much-prized maternal pose—which sometimes she even assumed for the benefit of Gäidik—and pleaded and begged him in the most winning and tearful manner to pardon his “dear little mamma,” but all to no purpose. She then resorted to bribery, and toys and pleasures of all possible sorts were promised, but the little fellow would not yield; and without a tear, without even vouchsafing a single word, he braved her with a strength of will absolutely confounding.

It was a long time before a certain great concession—a whole day spent on horseback in the woods with Gäidik—succeeded in mollifying him, and he allowed himself to be kissed, tucked into his little bed, and sung to sleep by his repentant and shamed mother, who cruelly regretted having once again yielded so unfortunately to her temper. Indeed, an uncomfortable impression remained with her for many hours that her little son would never quite forget what had just happened, and would never quite forgive her.

CHAPTER V

I

The Owl that lives in the belfry tower
Is a great Aristocrat,
And hours without end he holds speech with his friend,
The clerical, noiseless Bat.
"No nest that they build in the sun," quoth he,
"Is aught to my gray old wall,
The stones that sheltered my father's broods
Are solidier far than all.
The moon hath swung and the bourdon rung
To many a changeful hour,
Somewhere and when they will swing again,"
Quoth the Owl in the ruined tower.

II

And the black Bat winnowed through shine and shade
As the moonlit dusk were chaff,
And wavered around to the eerie sound
Of his clerical, wheezy laugh.
"It amuses me how they plan," said he,
This leathery-pinioned wag,
"The pie and daw with their sticks and straw
And dirty red-flannel rag!
The Bat, somewhen, will be Bird again,
Old Æsop's decree apart;
They build—tee-hee—upon theory,
But we on the human heart!"

III

"'Tis indeed absurd," quoth the solemn Bird;
"Who knows, who can tell, the hour,
Red flannel and sticks they will find won't mix!"
Quoth the Owl in the ruined tower. M. M.

It was a bright, fresh, exquisite morning when the children left the castle on their frisky little ponies. The

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

fields were still covered with a rosily white coating of mist, *le mouchoir de la Vierge* (the Virgin's kerchief), as the pious Bretons call this delicate and transparent early vapor which the first rays of the sun evoke from the vanishing night dews. Rainbow-hued beads of moisture sparkled on every bush, the smooth bridle-path through the forest rang cheerily under the horses' feet, and as the sun gradually fought its way through the interlaced branches, and made splashes of scintillating light among the underbrush, their spirits rose, and they laughed and shouted as hare or rabbit rushed out of cover, or a plover rose screaming above their heads, flapping its broad wings in an intoxication of freedom and strength.

The painful scene of the preceding night was almost forgotten, and save for the increased pallor of Gäidik and the somewhat nervous boisterousness of Lõic, had left no apparent traces.

The country became far more broken as they advanced, the long slopes covered with chestnut, cork-oak, and walnut trees soon giving way to sharper hills, densely grown with pines and firs and profusely interspersed by rocky crags. A choice place for game, as Gäidik and Lõic well knew, for it was there that the great autumn Kergõat hunts had taken place every year in the late Marquis's lifetime. Their cheeks glowed with excitement as they pushed their little ponies faster and faster, unheeding that the heavier animal ridden by the trustworthy groom in charge was not keeping pace with them on the rough ground and through the tangled boughs.

Presently they reached an open space beneath a precipice of dark, ivy-mantled rock that rose like a wall across their way, forcing the path to circle about it in a loop, and there they stopped to give the groom opportunity to

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

catch up with them, sitting at ease in their saddles, and admiring with all their faithful little hearts those woods which from time out of mind had belonged to their race, and which had scarcely changed since the days when *La Reine Berthe filait*. Every stick and sod there was dear to them, in that unprofaned atmosphere laden with the perfume of the wild flowers, heather, and gorse, growing thickly in every green fold and nook of the land, where the fallow deer and the red deer now led untroubled and peaceful lives.

After a short breathing-spell they sped on, the fragrant wind blowing their hair straight behind them in the rapidity of the pace they had adopted, galloping on through the soft, misty, broken sunshine filtered by the leafy boughs of trees four and five centuries old, and after a while they came upon a beautiful chestnut farm belonging to one of the tenants. It was a charming place, with its thatched roofs bowered in elder, hawthorn, and apple trees, and surrounded by an old-fashioned garden, sweet with clove-pinks, tall hollyhocks, nasturtiums, and honest cabbage roses. Four chubby-cheeked little girls in quaint antique Breton costume, looking like their own mothers seen through a reversed opera-glass, were sitting beneath a trim privet-hedge at the feet of a venerable, white-capped grandmother who was teaching them to knit, and the whole place had an air of prosperity, running over as it was with an abundance and superabundance of leaf and blossom that promised well for future harvests.

Both Lōic and Gäidik were enchanted. They dismounted on the edge of a pond overhung by hazel and willow where an enormous flock of geese, white as snow, were splashing violently among the lily-pads.

"How do you do, *Mam-Goz*?" Lōic asked, march-

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

ing across the turf to where the old dame was enconced.

She looked up, and, recognizing her youthful landlord, rose as quickly as her aged joints would allow and courtesied profoundly; but this was not the sort of greeting Lóic liked from his peasants, and with hand wide outstretched, he exclaimed: "Oh! don't you know me, *Mam-Goz* Kerion (Grandmother Kerion), don't you remember how Gäidik and I came last year to help you shell your chestnuts?"

"Thank Monseigneur kindly, I do remember," she replied, extremely gratified; "and how you have grown, Monsieur le Marquis! why, you are nearly as tall as your sister, now!" she concluded, gazing admiringly at the manly little figure before her. "It's a great honor to see you here, My Lord Marquis, you and Mademoiselle Gäidik, bless her lovely face."

"That's well, *Mam-Goz!*" Lóic said, joyfully. "I'm sure you mean it, because it is not everybody who gets a chance to be visited by any one as nice as Gäidik, and I feel exactly like you about her face; but we have stopped here to ask you where that narrow road to the left through the chestnuts leads to. You see, we have not been here since ever so many months, and then we turned back home, but to-day we have time and so we would like to go farther."

There he stood, his hands thrust deeply in the pockets of his riding-breeches, his sailor-hat pushed to the extreme back of his head, his riding-crop stuck jauntily under his arm, and his face turned full on his venerable retainer, in eager expectation of an interesting piece of information—a little master to be truly proud of.

"Ah, Monsieur le Marquis, that road leads to the Château de Kerdougaszt away up in the forest. Has

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

Monsieur le Marquis never heard of Kerdougaszt, once the finest castle for leagues and leagues around?"

No, Monsieur le Marquis had never heard of this fine castle, and not even Gäidik, when appealed to, could remember so much as its name.

"Well, well!" the old woman resumed, nodding her broad-winged *coiffe*, which cast her still delicate and beautiful face in shadows like those Rembrandt or Velasquez loved to paint. "Well, well! time passes and alters many things my little Lord, but Kerdougaszt, though much ruined, is still worth looking at!"

"That settles it, Lōic!" cried Gäidik, impetuously, "there is nothing so splendid as an old, old château; let us be off and see whether there are fairies there! Fairies always dwell in old châteaux, don't they, *Mam-goz Mar-Jann*?"

Old Mar-Jann (Mary-Jane) nodded her head, with a little smile of acquiescence. "Yes, My Lady," she replied, "of course they do, and there are strange fairies at Kerdougaszt, so they say. Go and seek them out. They will assuredly be glad to see you, for you and Monsieur le Marquis are of a truth good to look at."

The still bright eyes of the aged woman sparkled with genuine pleasure as she watched the children leap lightly into their saddles, and set off with the confidence of already long familiarity with the "noblest conquest of man." They both rode superbly—all the Kergöats had always ridden superbly—and even the worst leaping-places did not scare them.

On and on they rode through the dense wood, where foaming streamlets thundered beneath the serried pines with all the noisy importance of torrents, forming now and then tiny pools as green as emeralds dissolved in sunbeams. The path was becoming steep, and soon the

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

ponies' pace had to be slackened, for they were beginning to ascend a sort of promontory jutting out into the great sea of foliage, and soaring many hundred feet above it. It was for the most part of granite clothed in stone-pines and all the shrubs and hardy plants indigenous to such inhospitable soil, and stood as lonely in the quiet heart of the everlasting woods as any falcon or eagle's nest hanging in the branches. The stout, sure-footed ponies climbed the steep, sharp way quite fearlessly and steadily, their round little hoofs finding excellent hold upon the moss growing everywhere upon it; but the groom was forced to dismount and lead his horse, which by no means quietly or patiently accepted this, to him, entirely novel sort of road. There was nothing as yet to be seen except the dusky forest, shelving downward, and now and again vast slopes of naked rock scattered over with large, loose stones as if Titans had been playing there an amazing game of pitch-and-toss.

Presently the wholesome smell of pine-needle smoke began to mingle with the cool air that stirred the bracken, underbrush, and heather, and suddenly the deep, angry growl of a dog was heard above the path, which, after a brusque turn, ended abruptly upon a broad plateau, where a mass of ruined towers and frowning battlements, with a huge, square fortress at one end, the whole toned by the winds and the rains of centuries to a warm gray-green, stood in superb isolation.

In spite of ruin and time and neglect, however, it still looked majestic, imposing, and splendid, worthy of the great race whose stronghold and birthplace it had been so long, a race which now was also dwindling to a weather-beaten remnant, represented at that moment by a man standing beneath the crumbling donjon-keep, holding by the collar a fierce-looking wolf-hound.

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

Enormously tall, broad-shouldered, with silvered locks falling upon the turn-down collar of a coarse linen shirt, the light of the sun shining on his proud, delicate features, his straight, level brows, his plain work-a-day Breton costume—similar in every detail to that worn by any peasant of the hills, down to the heavy sabots enclosing his singularly small feet—there stood none other than the Marquis de Kerdougaszt himself, a smile lighting his entire countenance as the children dismounted and approached him.

"The dog will not hurt you while I am here," he called out to them, bowing with a grace and ease which would assuredly have instantly enlightened older visitors as to their interlocutor's real social standing, though he spoke in Breton, and used the countrified form of address, to which they were accustomed from inferiors, as he proceeded to welcome them.

A finer picture than that presented by this magnificent old man holding his magnificent dog by the collar on the threshold of his magnificently ruined castle would have been difficult to imagine. Even the children were impressed after their gay, thoughtless fashion, and Lōic, uncovering his bright locks, advanced, followed by Gāidik, with a certain hesitation and embarrassment quite foreign to him.

"We did not know that anybody lived in the castle," he said, apologetically. "Old *Mam-gos* Mar-Jann Kerion, at the farm below, told us there were only fairies here, and so we came; but if it is not allowed we will go right back. I am Lōic de Kergōat, and this is my sister Gāidik," he concluded, with a sudden impulse of instinctive decorum which a mere peasant certainly would not have aroused.

"Oh, you are Lōic de Kergōat, and this is your sister

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

Gäidik! Well, and I am the Marquis de Kerdougaszt, though you may perchance find it difficult to believe, my boy."

"Not at all," was the frank and ready reply. "You look as if you were; you have an air about you, and your voice is soft and slow. It is only we Nobles who have that sort of music in our voices."

The old Marquis laughed, well pleased and perfectly aware that he had just received the prettiest compliment that life had ever brought him.

"Hal hal!" he cried; "you have noticed that, have you? You are a sharp little man, and now you must come into my palatial abode and refresh yourselves, for you must both be thirsty and hungry—small folks like yourselves always are. If I rummage around a bit, I will no doubt find something worthy of your appetites. You shall have some of my nice brown bread and butter—we baked yesterday—and my old servant will make you some *galette de blé noir*.* She makes them beautifully when she is not cross—which, alas! now and then happens—so let us trust that to-day is one of the auspicious occasions."

Then he called aloud: "Marc'häid! Marc'häid! here are some little people who want to taste your *galette*," leading the way, as he did so, to a side door exquisitely carved and porched. A white-capped old woman showed herself for a second, grumbled something quite inarticulate, and again disappeared into the warm penumbra.

"There now!" exclaimed her master, with a comical uplifting of his delicately shaped but sadly toil-worn hands, "she is cross, after all, our good Marc'häid; but don't mind her, my dearies! She'll come round by-and-by and behave quite properly."

* Buckwheat cakes.

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

The children laughed. "She must be my fairy godmother!" Gäidik explained, "since we have the same name* and this is the castle of the fairies."

"Well, she does look a bit like *la Fée Carabosse*," the Marquis remarked, gravely; "so we must not let her make you any evil gifts—but come in, come in, and welcome to Kerdougaszt. Your fairy godmother is a very good woman when one knows her better. I have known her all my life—a long one—she was my nurse. Let me see! She is just seventeen years older than I am, from which notable fact we can by an artful calculation derive the extenuating circumstance that she is now just seventy-nine years old, and persons so aged are naturally cross from having taken the trouble to live so long."

Entirely set at ease by their host's delightful banter, the children followed him into a vast kitchen panelled and ceiled with oak, illumined by a huge fire of pine cones and needles, which crackled and leaped beneath the emblazoned mantel of a gigantic granite hearth. The place was rather bare of furniture—that is of the furniture ordinarily encountered in a kitchen—but all around it were ranged antique knight's stalls of singular beauty, and in a state of remarkable preservation, while a few old banners, gorgeously embroidered with now faded silks and gold, drooped above an equally venerable dresser, where some heavy tankards, dishes, and salvers of old silver gleamed between many odd pieces of the brilliantly colored, heavy earthenware which Breton peasants use, and which looked strangely incongruous in such company.

Standing before the ponderous table in the middle of this extraordinary apartment stood old Marc'haid, vio-

* Marc'haid, in diminutive Gäidik, Breton for Marguerite.

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

lently beating the batter for the *galette* in a wooden bowl, her wrinkled face as set and rigid as if she were engaged in some murderous assault upon an execrated enemy."

"There, there!" said her master, affectionately, patting her shoulder. "There, there, there, old lady! Just look up and see what nice little guests you are working for! Isn't it a pity to be so grumpy under the circumstances?"

The irate dame, partially conquered by the gentle chiding of the tone, did as she was bidden, and, catching the honest inquisitiveness and astonishment of the two pairs of big gray eyes fixed upon her, burst into dry, cackling laughter.

"Marc'häid is disarmed! Sound the trumpets, beat the drums, peace is declared!" cried the Marquis, triumphantly. "And now, my children, while your *galettes* are being prepared, come and see my observatory." With which words he drew them to the embrasure of a long lancet-window, raised from the floor by two steps.

"Now look," he said, with pardonable pride in his voice, as he stretched his hand towards the magnificent panorama unfolded before them.

Far, far below the shelving, verdant woods and stretching out to infinite horizons was the distant sea, studded with sails, the capriciously curving shores extending on both sides into realms of softly sparkling light, with here and there a rocky island showing dimly as a dream above the waves. The whole picture was a dazzle of gold, of emerald, and of sapphire, and familiar as the children were with this beautiful Breton sea and land, they yet exclaimed aloud in their admiration.

"Ah, yes, it is grand!" chimed in their host; "and one should not complain when one has such a spectacle

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

to admire every day of one's life. You, too, at Kergoat have a magnificent view. I have not been there since your grandmother's time, but I remember it well. Dear me, what a lovely woman your grandmother was in those days! To be sincere, you are very much like her, *Mademoiselle Marc'häid*."

"I!" exclaimed the amazed Gäidik, in genuine astonishment. "No, no, I am very ugly! But do pray, *Monsieur de Kerdougaszt*, say *Gäidik* or *Gäid*! Everybody does so, and I'm only called by my full name when I have been very naughty."

"Well then, my little Gäid, so you are sometimes naughty, and you consider yourself ugly, eh?"

"Of course! Mamma always says that I'm a disgrace to everybody. She, you know, is very, very beautiful."

"I know! I know! She created a great sensation when she arrived in Brittany after her marriage. And how is madame your mamma, my dears; quite well I trust?"

"Quite well," echoed Loïc, who was leaning confidently against the old Marquis's knee, as he sat on the broad window-sill. "Why do you never come to see us, *Monsieur*? I would like to show you my boat, my four-in-hand of Exmoor ponies, my garden, and all my things, and," he added, politely, "I'm sure mamma would be much pleased to see you."

"Hum! hum!" *Monsieur de Kerdougaszt* muttered; "I am not so very sure of that, and although I would undoubtedly enjoy the sight of all your treasures, yet I cannot promise to come. I am a regular hermit, my boy, and I never, never go anywhere."

"Why?" Loïc asked, eagerly. "Do you hate all mankind, like my Uncle Pierre, who says that since France is a republic, the country has gone to the devil, and nobody is fit to speak to."

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

The old Marquis burst into a roar of laughter. "You funny, old-fashioned child!" he fairly gasped. "Yes, I am much of your Uncle Pierre's opinion. But that is not all," he continued, when he had recovered his breath, "I'm too poor to visit those of my equals who are more fortunate than myself; that would humiliate both them and me."

"Poor! with such a magnificent castle!" the incredulous L^oic cried. "That's not possible!"

"But my magnificent castle is in ruins, L^oic. This room and one other are the only safe ones to inhabit; all the rest have long been given up to the owls and the rats, who, if the ceilings fall down, will not prove a great loss."

L^oic bent forward, a sudden awe, a swift wave of sadness spreading over his features.

"And are you living all alone here with your old nurse?" he asked, almost in a whisper, "without anybody to talk to you and amuse you?"

His expression was so grave and so wistful, that the Marquis, deeply touched, impulsively kissed the smooth forehead nestling against his broad shoulder.

"No, my good little friend, it is not as bad as that by far. Don't waste your pity, for I have my own two sons always with me here, and very excellent companions they are, too."

"Two little boys? Where are they? Why don't you call them, Monsieur; perhaps they would like to try our ponies, and, also, I smell the *galettes* frying; don't they want any *galettes*?"

Again the Marquis laughed heartily. "They are big men, my boy, and they are working just now in the woods—but here is the *Fée Carabosse* preparing to ring the bell which summons them home. You can

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

share your *galettes* with them, and I feel certain that they will admire the ponies, so all will be for the best."

Gäidik, her brows drawn together, perplexed and vaguely sorrowful, was gazing at him with great sympathetic eyes. His own eyes smiled at her, and, taking the little hand nearest to him, he patted it with grandfatherly tenderness.

"Some day," he remarked, softly, "you will make a man very happy, my little Gäidik. Unless I am much mistaken, in spite of *Madame votre Mere's* gloomy forebodings, you are going to develop into that rare and precious being, a real *Grande Dame*," and he raised her little, sunburned fingers to his lips as gravely and courteously as if his prophecy had already come true.

At that moment the promised bell began to clang deafeningly outside the kitchen door, rung by old Marc'haid, who was jerking its long chain with no gentle hand. Flocks of pigeons rose from the ivy-grown ruins at the clamor, and shortly afterwards heavy steps were heard approaching.

"Is that our groom?" asked Löic, turning away from the window.

"No, your groom is provided for. I took the liberty of sending him back to Mar-Jann Kerion's farm, telling him to come again at five o'clock, which will be quite soon enough for us to have to bid you good-bye. Mar-Jann is my debtor for a few little things, and will give him a good dinner as well as feed the horses much better than it could have been done here. It is my big boys whom you hear, and there they are to answer for themselves."

The two young men who entered were both equally tall, fair, and handsome, with delicate features, clean-shaven faces, dark-gray eyes, and proudly curved mouths,

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

disclosing, when smiling, wonderfully white teeth. Like their father, they were extremely broad-shouldered and slender-waisted, and also like him wore the most ordinary of peasant costumes. One bore on his shoulder a woodman's axe, while the other carried with the greatest ease a rough and exceedingly heavy sawyer's trestle.

These, the last of the Kerdougaszts, were patient-looking men, having the quiet gaze of those who deal with nature and the slow, graceful movements of the keen-sighted. Truly these two perfect representatives of Brittany's ancient Aristocracy were behind the times—these new and wordy times in which France, once so glorious, has floundered disastrously for above of a century—for they were very silent. Their father had seen his country humbled to the dust by idle babble, and the sight had taught him to dry up in his children the springs of idle speech. When they had anything to say, they said it, but if they had nothing really worthy of mention, they kept those proud lips of theirs obstinately closed. Fate and their father's will had ruled that these two superb *gars* should have no wider sphere than an obscure Breton forest, though they were obviously created to shine in the great world's gilded arena, and yet they were absolutely content, for they were restful men, strong enough to rely upon life's most ordinary duties, well accomplished, to satisfy their consciences. Moreover, their ancestors had assuredly handed down to them, with their clear-cut profiles and gigantic stature, a philosophy which exalts above all things the forest life, the strife with elemental forces and its resulting daring and intrepidity, no less than the simple joys and the sense of infinite peace that are to be found, like shy wood blossoms, in the forest twilight.

They evinced no ill-bred surprise at finding their lone-

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

ly house invaded by such unusual visitors, but with grave and winning courtesy made them feel that they were sincerely welcome, and that their presence was a rare and valuable pleasure. There was a striking resemblance of feature between the Kerdougaszts, but the father was gayer, quicker in his glance, and under most circumstances it would undoubtedly fall to the younger men's lot to execute that which their father had planned. Indeed, in spite of his rough attire, the old Kerdougaszt's presence suggested the Court, while his sons were clearly intended for the camp. The Marquis had in his day passed through both, and had emerged with set ideas and adamant principles, of which his sons' whole natures were the result.

The little party which gathered around the great kitchen table to partake of Dame Marc'hâid's fragrant *galettes* was absolutely unlike anything the children had ever seen before, but, unknown to themselves, Lôic and Gäidik felt more "at home" there than they did in the company of their mother and their mother's splendid friends. They could not have given a name to the superiority which fascinated them in their three hosts, but somehow or other they realized its extraordinary charm, which would have made all strictly modern people seem vulgar, and they both expanded and were happy beneath its influence.

"Oh!" Gäidik suddenly said to the Marquis, beside whom she sat, "how happy you are to live here all the time, to be always in the woods or on the sea, and never to have to go away into the noise and dust. I wish mamma would let us come and stay with you for a long, long time!"

The big men laughed, but they were evidently touched, for all the conflicting thoughts striving together in the

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

children's little minds, vivid in fancy and childish in ignorance, were very apparent and moved the three Aristocrats to an emotion which was quite indescribable. The simple meal was drawing to a close, and when they rose from the table, Lōic asked eagerly to be shown the rest of the castle. The gates of an enchanted world were standing open before him, and he, like Gäidik, was anxious to see what lay beyond them. Indeed, they both looked up into their new friend's face with such frank audacity, such wistful innocence, that, even though the display of so much fallen grandeur, so much stoically born poverty, must necessarily be painful, yet the old Nobleman never dreamed of refusing their request, and instantly led the way into the dismantled building.

This was going into fairyland indeed, for the children's natural sense of the beauties of form and color was aroused by the magnificent proportions of these grand halls which had all the subdued glow of old jewels. The mellow light of verdure-shaded sun-rays shed a soft hue upon the pathetic misery of the brave old house, bearing its misfortune in dignified isolation. Here and there some remnants of tapestries still clung to the walls of the state apartments, the colossal figures faintly visible upon the worn-out warp seeming the phantoms of a spirit-world. Nearly all the window-panes—painted long ago by a master's hand—were cracked or broken, and had been patched with thick, common glass or replaced by boards. One cedar-lined room which had been the boudoir of the Chatelaines of Kerdougaszt, displayed on its carved and delicately gilded panels the arms of Brittany emblazoned in pale with those of the resident family—a reminder of some Royal alliance—but its costly parquetted floor had fallen in, leaving bare the indestructible oaken beams which alone had resisted the

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

cruel hand of time. Here a host of bats, terrified by the visitors standing on the abysmal threshold, flew from their dusky perches in the crevices of the ceiling and circled wildly about, dipping and plunging madly in and out of a depending veil of gray cobwebs; but neither of the children laughed, they were too much awed for that, and when the old Marquis turned away with a smothered sigh he felt two little hands slide simultaneously into each of his own in a silent and restrained sympathy, which was infinitely tender and grateful.

"Now, my dears," he said, in studiously cheerful tones, for the momentary silence of these bright little creatures had something strangely pathetic about it, "we will go and see the chapel. That we have preserved from all serious harm so far, my sons and I, and although its original splendor is greatly impaired, we have endeavored to make God's resting-place among us still habitable, as it was the duty of good Catholics to do."

The children, following him down-stairs, listened with reverent ears and beating hearts. They felt as if they were hearing Kadoc's oft-told stories of how their forefathers had died grandly and fearlessly on the scaffold, in the *noyades*, or in the slaughter of Quiberon, for the very air of that ruined home was redolent of courage, dignity, and fidelity, and the words of this old Marquis, whose existence was now so narrow, whose means were so terribly straitened, whose days were regulated with the exact and severe precision of mere peasantry, thrilled them to the very core of their little souls.

The same intoxicating perfume of the past surrounded them as they entered the tiny sacred edifice, the whole front of which was covered with a vigorous climbing rose, throwing its audacious branches upward to the very cross upon the carefully mended roof, thus conceal-

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

ing the somewhat amateurish handiwork of the Marquis and his sons. Dark and tranquil it was inside, and filled with an undying fragrance of incense lingering amid the damp of ages. The altar of pure twelfth-century work was decorated with fresh flowers; above it was a wonderful crucifix of ivory and silver, and through the wide-opened panel of a transept window the smell of the pine woods and the songs of birds floated freely in.

At the door they were joined by Gui and Yvon de Kerdougaszt, who were waiting to bid the children good-bye before returning to their labor in the forest, and at a sign from their father they also entered the little chapel, where they all knelt down together. Slowly the Marquis repeated the *Chapelet*, his sons giving the responses in their clear, full, far-reaching voices, fervently, with all their hearts, and in Breton—the only language they spoke. A nightingale was singing somewhere in the big hawthorn-tree outside the windows, and some long tendrils of honeysuckle which had forced themselves into a narrow cranny opened in the massive wall by a thousand years of sea-wind, thrust their delicately curled horns of perfume around the pew where the little group knelt.

The prayer finished, Yvon and Gui preceded their father to the exquisite holy-water font, carved from a single block of onyx, and bending in turn reverently before him, kissed the hand extended to receive the precious drops, all this with the simplicity due to long habit, and the passionate devotion they so visibly entertained for him. And then they disappeared behind the dense screen of trees and were seen no more.

“You must have some milk and brown bread and butter before your departure,” the Marquis explained to Lóic and Gàidik, who were wistfully gazing after the young men. “Come, we will enjoy these refreshments

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

far better in the open air, so we will sit on my little terrace and tell *la Fée Carabosse* to bring them there at once, since it is already four o'clock."

His "little terrace" was an exquisite place which seemed to hang above sea and woods, an antique, broad, and roomy open gallery covered by an all-embracing wistaria in full bloom, where his wrinkled, cross old servant soon appeared bearing a heavy silver tray, with some delicious milk in a carved silver pot, an appetizing brown loaf, and two exquisite Sèvres cups, blue as the azure sky.

"We have a few things like this left," the Marquis said, touching the priceless toys gently. "It may be nonsense, but I think that your milk will taste better out of them," and, sitting on a wooden bench beside the stone balustrade covered with its flowering creeper, he filled up the cups with the snowy beverage. Lóic had established himself on the parapet, his feet hanging down, one hand clasping Gäidik's, who seemed to have fallen into one of her dreamiest moods.

Suddenly he said, turning to the Marquis, in a quiet, speculative, matter-of-fact voice: "How much would it cost, Monsieur de Kerdougaszt, to make your castle just as it used to be?"

"How much?" echoed the astounded gentleman. "A very, very great deal, my child. What makes you ask such a question?"

"Because I know that one day Gäidik and I will have a lot of money, and I thought that perhaps you would let her marry one of your boys, so that we could give it all to you without your being able to refuse. Then you could repair all the grand rooms and halls that make you sigh now when you look at them."

The Marquis gazed for a moment at Lóic without

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

speaking, then drawing him to his knee, he said, in a voice which trembled a little:

“You are a very good little man, Lõic, and I sincerely appreciate what you said just now; but listen, my boy. I have sundry old-fashioned notions and prejudices, one of which is, that a man—a *gentilhomme* that is—should owe nothing to his wife, and even in the absolutely impossible case of your mother’s permitting her pretty daughter to marry a penniless man, I would never accept such a sacrifice on poor Gäidik’s part. My sons have been brought up as peasants, which is for them far more honorable than being fortune-hunters. Of course, you are too young to understand all this, and you probably think me a very severe and ungracious old curmudgeon to speak as I do, but later when you are older you will realize the truth of my words. The old faiths still live, very simple, warm, and earnest in my old heart, Lõic, and I cannot change myself at this late day! We have always been proud and stern, and although our family records have often been checkered by fierce and perchance lawless actions, yet there has never been in them any baseness. I may have erred in my judgment, but I have preferred to let my sons grow up in total ignorance of the world, rather than strain every nerve and sink our last slender resources in order to educate them and open to them the possibility of later on selling their names to the highest bidder.”

The Marquis was now thinking aloud far more than talking to the children, who, however, seemed enthralled by his words, and listened, immovable, and with the most profound attention, as he continued:

“We owe nothing to anybody. We live like owls in our crumbling watch-tower, it is true, but we are spared the sight of humiliating compromises, of old and glorious

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

titles being bartered for the ill-gotten wealth of the *Haute-Banque* and *nouveaux riches*. My sons can scarcely read and write, they toil all day long to obtain by the sweat of their brows the meagre fare with which they are content, but we have all three remained worthy of the past, and if our race dies with them, at any rate it will end worthily, instead of finishing in the mud, as so many as great have done. I would sooner see them both stretched lifeless before me at this minute than know it otherwise."

The old Nobleman's voice had become almost triumphant in its intensity, but suddenly remembering that he was speaking to two children who, clever though they were, could not possibly comprehend his theme, he checked himself, gave a reassuring pat to Lœic's shoulder, and began anew in a different key, making them laugh heartily with descriptions of his daily existence recounted with the exquisite humor and genuine wit of a man whose spirit had remained young, and who did not cloy his good taste by cheap literature and the perusal of daily newspapers.

He told them of another old Nobleman, who, poorer even than himself, and living all alone in one room of the once sumptuous *Hôtel* which from time immemorial had belonged to his family, crept at the dead of night out of the small Breton town where it was situated, in order to gather from a neighboring wood dead branches and bracken for his fire. "Poor old fellow," he concluded, "he carries it home on his shoulders, stealthily, fearfully, like a thief, gliding along the dark ramparts, bent almost double under the weight, and the good people of the neighborhood think that that wood is haunted by a misshapen gnome, because he has been occasionally glimpsed from afar bending forlornly over the little heaps of pine-

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

cones he builds under the trees. Oh, we are a fine lot, aren't we, with our infernal pride? Why, that man who has twelve hundred years of pedigree behind him feeds principally on mushrooms, which he gathers before sunrise in the fields, and yet he refuses disdainfully to sell one footstool of the magnificent ancient furniture with which his creviced *Hôtel* is filled. Isn't it curious?"

"You need never be without a good fire, Monsieur, with all this forest around your castle," Lõic remarked, practically, with a wise little nod of the head, "which is a great comfort in winter."

"Right you are, my boy. Very well said. It has indeed been often a great comfort when there was little else to brighten one up. But here, alas, are your horses, a fact I truly regret, for you, too, have been a great comfort this day."

"Already here," Gäidik said, with a sigh. "Pray, Monsieur de Kerdougaszt," she whispered, standing on tiptoe beside him, while Lõic ran forward to pat his beloved pony. "If by any chance you were to change your mind—and if you could get to like me—I would be very pleased to marry either Gui or Yvon when I am older, because what Lõic said is true; it is a pity not to repair your castle—and also I would be always so near Lõic. I do not wish to marry at all, but if I am obliged to do so—"

"Upon my word," the old Noble murmured, "you are the most amazing children I have ever met, but your little hearts are certainly in the right place. If I were you, however, Gäidik, I would not tell this to your beautiful mamma, for I do not think that such a plan would quite meet with her approval, and you might be scolded."

"I am always being scolded," the child replied, philo-

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

sophically. "Not that I do not often deserve it, though," she added, in explanation. Then she bent down to pat the lean, intelligent head of the huge wolf-hound. "Good-bye *Bull-C'Hurun*" (Thunder-bolt), she said, tenderly, "you are as good as you can be, just like everybody else here," and again she sighed.

"*Bull-C'Hurun*, just like everybody else here, will be glad to see you again, my dear, as soon as possible," the Marquis said, kissing her tenderly before lifting her into her saddle, and then turning to the groom, he added: "Take good care of them, Gradlon, they are worth the whole country-side put together!"

"Have no fear, M'sieu l'Marquis," that trusty functionary replied, respectfully touching his hat. "I followed the guidon with my late Lord, and the Lady Marc'haid as well as my young Lord Lōic Ab-Vor (Lōic, son of the sea) are as safe with me as if they were my own children, though it's difficult sometimes to keep up with them," he concluded, with a look of affectionate pride in the direction of the brother and sister, who, having said their last good-byes and uttered their last heart-felt thanks, were disappearing at their usual breakneck pace down the steep path.

The sun was not as bright as it had been, or perchance it only seemed so to the children, who were genuinely sorry to leave Kerdougaszt, but the home ride could not but be delightful through those deep, fragrant woods, and they welcomed Gradlon's proposal to return by a different road than that traversed in the morning; and so, eagerly discussing the events of the day, Lōic and Gaidik brushed their way rapidly through the forest growth.

Half an hour later they came upon a wooded rock, crowned by a quaint little gray tower, picturesque, aged, cloister-like, with an abundance of ivy clothing it in brill-

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

iantly dark greenery. Half of it was in ruins, and one of its pointed gables showed a deep oval embrasure curtained by coils of ivy and wild clematis hanging down across the aperture.

"That is Saint Gwenolé's shrine, Monsieur Lōic," said the groom, overtaking the children, and piously removing his hat.

"Oh! is it Saint Gwenolé who saved your namesake King Gradlon's life from the waves?" cried Gäidik, to whom every ancient legend of Brittany was known.

"Yes, Mademoiselle Gäidik, and a mighty good King he was," the groom answered, pointing with his hunting-crop. "They say that on moonlight nights one sees King Gradlon and his ladylove Dahut go up that crazy flight of steps there to pray with the Saint."

"We must come at night and see if that's true," Lōic declared, enthusiastically—"but hark, what's that noise over there behind those big trees? A lot of people singing?"

Indeed, above the low, sweet, entangled music of the forest a host of human voices was becoming more and more audible, singing a sombre and solemn *Maronad* (funeral chant.)

"It must be Monsieur le Comte de Loskoff's funeral passing along through the woods to reach the family tomb to-morrow morning. He died at his sister's place, and they have had to bring the body all the way back by ox-team," was Gradlon's explanation.

"God rest his soul," murmured both children, reverently crossing themselves, and as the voices grew more distinct they urged their ponies through the leafy dell surrounding Saint Gwenolé's ruined shrine, and leaped over a hedge upon a winding road, where a double row of tall beech-trees with wide-stretching arms and moss-grown

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

trunks threw deep shadows, checkered with pale golden sunbeams.

Round a bend of this sylvan path a long procession was advancing with slow, even pace. In front of the two double files of peasants, one of men, the other of women, all holding great rosaries in their clasped hands, and wearing the customary long, hooded, mourning cloaks of black cloth, the men bare-headed, but the women with their white *coiffes* hidden by the sombre hoods, came a low ox-cart draped with gorse-fringed sheets of white linen and drawn by twenty-four snow-white oxen, whose horns had been blackened and polished. Upon each beast a white sheet was fastened by thick ropes of gorse blossoms and drooped almost to the ground in lax folds, while twenty-four men, one at each side of every pair, walked along, holding tall branches of gorse and oak tied with streamers of crape. In the middle of the cart the white-sheeted coffin reposed on a bed of thickly strewn white heather and golden gorse, which national blooms were also entwined above it in a broad, flat cross.

Breaking suddenly on the woodland solitude, this quaint pageant seemed called up by some enchantment, and the children stood breathlessly gazing at it in amazement and awe; then as it drew nearer they dismounted and knelt reverently down on the mossy wayside while Gradlon, with head uncovered and bending to his saddle-bow, held the two ponies behind them.

With one accord the eyes of all the mourners turned upon the kneeling children, and a tall, fair man, who was walking alone immediately behind the coffin, wearing the full uniform of a naval lieutenant, his plumed hat beneath his arm and his sword heavily knotted with crape, bowed low to them.

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

This was the dead man's brother, now himself Comte de Loskoff, and heir to the superb château they knew so well, and where they had so often enjoyed the free range of the park and gardens and of the long terraces overlooking the sea—a wilderness of flowers, enclosing one of the finest castles in Brittany.

There was unutterable desolation in the chant intoned by the dead Count's loyal vassals, and tears gathered in the eyes of the Kergoat children, for the last time they had seen him he had laughed gayly and caressed them, waving his hand and calling out a merry *Au Revoir* as they galloped away. This tide of recollection rushed with painful force upon them as they listened to the pathetic heroic words of the interminable *Maronad* :

“Raven, death-black bird of Fate,
Beak of blood and eyes of hate,
Why, oh why
Thus to rend our hearts in twain
On thy path of woe and pain
Dost thou fly?

“Ah, our Master! None were seen
Who could match thy princely mien
This many a day.
Yet we, thus assembled, pass,
'Neath a menhir in the grass
Thy head to lay.

“Gentle soul, now freed from chain,
Who could draw the bridle rein
Like to thee?
Midst the knightly throngs that were
Who could strike the knightly spur
As eagerly?

“Ah, that mailed in panoply
Death should cross his sword with thee
A stronger foe!

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

Loskoff, weep! through farm and stead,
Loskoff, weep! thy father's head
Lieth low.

“ Ah, our Master! dead with thee
Light and life droop down and be
Moth and rust;
Mourn we thy departed day
And our memories cling alway
To thy dust.” *

At last the long train was gone, lost to sight in a turn of the road, but Lōic and Gāidik still knelt entranced, their little hearts very sad indeed, and when at last they rose and spoke their voices were low and full of pity, this sorrowful ending to a day of pleasure having a grim pathos for them not easily to be shaken off. Indeed, the weary, lonely, melancholy figure of the new Count stood out in painful contrast with their remembrance of the kindly, merry presence of their old friend, who was even now being taken in that flower-laden coffin to the great castle where they had last seen him so full of life and health.

* A free translation, or rather paraphrase, of some representative verses, in the metre of the Gaelic original.

Book II
The Struggle

CHAPTER VI

The grovelling Mole was made one day
Preceptor to the Sparrow,
Who made him to sing Well-a-way!
Out! Fie! Alas and Harrow!
"What can you teach," bold Jack would cry
"When you but crawl, and I can fly?
You'd best behave, or 'twill be found
I saw you delving underground!
Pray notice"—here a wink gave he—
"The butcher-bird in yonder tree!" M. M.

"Lôic, get your German books! We will first proceed with the syntax, and then you can go on with your translation of Schiller's 'Bells.'"

Lôic deliberated for a moment, with head held high, and then burned his ships.

"No!" he replied, very distinctly and resolutely.

"What!" cried the tutor, aghast. "Do I understand you to intimate that you decline to take your German lesson?"

"That's about the size of it," the boy replied, with an exasperatingly gentle smile, "for I certainly don't want to do so, M'sieu' Rivier!"

The tutor's dull eyes flashed ominously. "You intend, no doubt, to take the management of your future studies into your own hands," he remarked, ironically.

"Well, that depends on what studies you mean!" Lôic replied, quite undisturbed. "I hate German, for instance; it is a beastly language, like a stack of hay in the mouth.

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

I speak it almost as well as I do French, Russian, and Spanish, because mamma fenced me in with nurses of all nationalities ever since I was knee-high to a toad, and that's quite enough for a poor little kid not yet twelve years old—but learn the syntax and translate the old jingles I won't!"

At this juncture an emperor-moth fluttered in at the open window, and Lōic, flicking at it with his handkerchief to make it fly back into the garden, bent clear out to gaze after it, and began to sing at the top of his voice:

‘Chante, Rossignol, chante
Toi qui a le coeur gai.
Le mien n'est pas de meme
Il est bien affigé!’

Not even in his wildest moments had Lōic ever gone quite as far as that upon the road of insubordination, and to say that the tutor was furious would scarcely meet the situation. “Hold your tongue!” he cried, with a violent gesture of his damp, unwholesome-looking hands. “What's the meaning of this new caprice—do you imagine that I'm going to yield to it?”

Lōic ceased to sing, and burst into a hearty laugh. “Oh, of course I'm not stupid enough to think you'll do so gracefully, M'sieu' Rivier,” he said, with a merry twinkle of his mischievous gray eyes, sitting down once more and thrusting his hands deep into his pockets; “but yield you will have to in the end, whether you like it or not.”

At the sound of those defiant words, Rivier's face altered so that for a second Lōic thought his eyes or his brain were playing him some inexplicable trick as he looked at him, for the whole pallid countenance had in an instant become literally distorted with passion, the

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

iris of the butter-milk-colored eyes seemed to have dilated till the bilious white was all but invisible, the thin lips were drawn back from the teeth like those of some snarling animal, and the cheeks and forehead were mottled with greenish patches.

"You little ruffian!" he said, in a low, concentrated voice. "Do you think I am the sort of a man to be ordered about by the like of you?"

As he faced his pupil, his lower jaw working spasmodically up and down, as if trying to chew his rage into small pieces, he was a truly villanous object to contemplate, and each moment L^oic expected him to spring upon him; but Rivier disappointed him in this, for at heart he was a coward, and the well-grown, muscular boy of eleven would prove, as he well knew, by no means a despicable adversary. Even in his present furious mood, the man fully weighed risks and consequences, and so, before the lapse of another five seconds, he resumed something of his usual expression, and wiped his forehead with his handkerchief as he would have done after some great physical exertion.

In appearance the tutor was tall and spare, with an elongated head somewhat abnormally prominent at the back. He had a tell-tale mouth, betraying more than one weakness, a sensual, domineering nose, and a chin that retreated from a physiognomy of which it was no doubt ashamed. Ordinarily, however, his manner was that of a man reserved but competent, and by a smart piece of manœuvring he had obtained the extremely well-paid post of tutor to L^oic de Kerg^oat, contriving to completely dazzle the Marquise by his very real science and undoubted talents. Moreover, being a person of small and easy scruples, he successfully posed for the convinced Royalist and ultra-pious Catholic he had never

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

been. Indeed, had she but known it, he was a socialist of the most pronounced type, and was too envious and selfish to bear good-will to anything or anybody standing above him; but his masterly fashion of casting dust in the eyes of his fair employer had hitherto been crowned with complete success—at least so he thought—and Lōic's aggressive *sortie* appeared to him like a veritable bolt from the blue.

"Now then, sir," he said at last, with a peremptoriness to which he had not habituated his young charge, "we will have none of your tantrums, please. You just barely escaped being severely punished, let me tell you."

"I'm not accustomed to be spoken to like that," Lōic replied, hotly, an angry flush springing to his face.

"No doubt it was a liberty on my part, *Monsieur le Marquis!*" the other responded, scornfully, "so pray deign to excuse it." Then, noticing that a very little more would throw Lōic completely off his balance, and that with probably lightning-like consequences to himself, he managed to suppress his own temper, and in a completely altered tone continued: "What is the matter with you, my boy? Until now, although you are no model scholar, yet you have been at least polite and to a certain extent deferential."

Instantly the lad's threatening expression changed too, a contemptuous smile dawned at the corners of his lips, and he quite shamelessly winked. "That," he remarked, significantly, "is because I did not know you as I do now, M'sieu' Rivier. You can't expect me to respect somebody who makes Malghorn his bosom friend, and plots and plans with him all sorts of disgusting things."

The tutor jumped to his feet. "What!" he gasped. "Malghorn! Who told you that I made a friend of him, and what do you mean by saying that I plot and plan?"

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

His hands still deep in his pockets, his head resting easily and comfortably on the back of his chair, the hope of the Kergoats was looking at his tutor through half-shut lids.

"I heard you with my own ears telling Malghorn, the other day, that Aristocrats were only fit to be *fichus dedans*, and that religion was all humbug. Now don't you think mamma would be pleased to know that you, whom she calls a pillar of Monarchy and the Church, are a *Red*, a real *Communard*, and all the rest of it?"

"*Sacré nom d'un Chien*, but where did you hear all this? Can you at least tell me that?" the now really terrified tutor exclaimed, sawing the air with clinched fists, like one wellnigh demented.

Löic saw now that he "held the rope," as he would have graphically put it, and was not slow to take advantage of this gratifying fact.

"Oh, don't swear, M'sieu' Rivier—that's a bad example to set me. Keep cool and I'll tell you all about it. I heard all this and much more while riding home the other day along the grass path behind the orchard, where you were smoking your cigar in company with your friend Malghorn. Pantin's hoofs were not making much noise on the turf, and, what's more, you were both shouting at the top of your lungs, so that I heard you quite well. '*Sacrées crapules d'Aristocrates, sâle prêtraille*'—that's one of the things you were saying. I laughed till I cried at the time, to think of mamma's face if she only could have heard you, too; but afterwards I reflected that what you are doing is not very *chic*, for mamma believes in you as if you were Saint Chrysostom himself, though since you funked riding *Le Real* she does not perhaps admire you quite as much as she did, still—"

"Funked riding *Le Real*! Löic, I am beginning to

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

think that you are mad," Rivier exclaimed, at his wits' end to give this exceedingly uncomfortable conversation a turn which would at least restore him the advantage of debate.

"Well, that's a good one! Green as grass you turned when that poor old goat of a superannuated steeple-chaser began to dance out of mere fun. But that's neither here nor there. If you want me to keep silent about your little failings, you must be more amiable to me than you have been of late, and especially not fly into rages as you did just now, because I don't like it a bit."

"So you have not as yet spoken about what you pretend to have heard?" the bewildered and sorely frightened man stupidly asked.

"What do you take me for, M'sieu' Rivier—a spy? I'm pretty bad, perhaps, but I'm not that, and when I speak I'll do so right before you—never fear! You seem to think that everybody is a sneak!" Lōic promptly retorted, with extreme disdain.

Here the tutor committed the irreparable error of blustering. "Perhaps," he sneered, "you would like me to call Madame la Marquise at once, so that you may put your delicate threat into execution! All you'll get for your pains will be a sound thrashing, I can promise you that, you young game-cock!"

Lōic looked at his imprudent victim for a moment with pupils diminishing to a pin-point, then he gave a little, low whistle. "Really!" he murmured. "Well, what do you say to our trying the experiment? We can give her all the curdling details of this morning's work, and if she doesn't appreciate the story I'll fetch Uncle René, who arrived an hour ago, and who'll make a splendid addition to the audience. He may take you down a peg or two, but—"

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

Rivier rose once more from his chair in great agitation.

"What do you mean? Do you know what your words imply?"

"Certainly I do," Lōic said, quietly. "Uncle René won't be taken in by you as Mamma used to be; besides, he has always been just to me and to Gāidik."

"The Duchess d'Aspremont?"

"Yes, my sister Gāidik. She'd be the one to make you sing low, M'sieu' Rivier—she's not such a fool as I am!"

"From all I've heard of her—" the tutor began, with a sneer; but, without giving him time to proceed any further, Lōic came at him as if shot out of a catapult, his eyes dark with fury, his face set like flint, his fists doubled.

"Don't you dare to speak of Gāidik in that tone, or I'll knock all your teeth down your ugly throat!" he cried, choking with rage. "I heard you and that viper Malghorn say enough about us all the other day to judge what you're capable of. Let Gāidik alone, do you hear?"

"What—what—" stammered Rivier, in a high, tremulous voice—he was livid with fright. "I'll say anything I like about her or"—he finished with a splutter, for Lōic had struck him full on the mouth with a force that nearly swept him off his feet. As it was, after executing some remarkable gesticulations and contortions in the effort to preserve his balance, over he went with a crash, and on top of him a heavy table loaded with books, stationery, and capacious, old-fashioned inkstands newly filled that day with writing-fluids of several brilliant colors.

A second later the door opened and Madame de Ker-goat, attracted by these sounds of battle, entered quickly. Her great, back eyes stared wide with astonish-

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

ment as they fell upon the scene; but a sense of the ridiculous was one of her strong points, and as she caught sight of the tutor hastily extricating himself from the ruins, a scarecrow figure, dripping with ink, with hair on end, eyes bulging with fright, and one aimless hand smearing his variegated countenance into strange shades and combinations, she barely suppressed a burst of almost uncontrollable laughter.

"My dearest dear!" she at last managed to exclaim. "What on earth is the matter?"

Her dearest dear, still standing with squared shoulders, braced for immediate action, did not reply, and she repeated: "What is it, Lõic? Have—have you been fighting?"

A fresh spasm suddenly seized her, her hands began to tremble and the corners of her mouth to quiver. "Tell—tell—me," she began, in unsteady tones, but there she stopped, for at this juncture the very last person Monsieur Rivier would have desired to see, appeared within the open door.

The new-comer was an extremely tall and strikingly handsome man, whose relationship to Lõic and Gäidik was proclaimed at one glance. There were the same finely chiselled features, the same deep-set, dark-gray, black-lashed eyes and dusky, copper-hued hair, and the same alert, thorough-bred expression of face and attitude.

Past experiences had taught *Comte René*—as he was familiarly called—the wisdom of not meddling with his erratic sister-in-law's management of her children, excepting on very grave occasions; but as this one seemed certainly to enter that category, he stepped forward with a composure of countenance that was either a tribute to the perfection of his self-control or a libel on his sense of humor.

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

"What has happened, Geneviève?"

"I do not k-kn-o-ow," quavered Madame de Kergoat, making another heroic effort to conceal her irresistible desire to laugh. "I heard a most extraordinary tumult, and ran here to find Lōic and Monsieur Rivier *aux prises*, I really believe."

The Count evidently required no further enlightenment, for now, as if completely comprehending the situation, he said, simply:

"This being so, you had best leave it all to me. Go to your room, Lōic, and wait there till I come," he added, turning to the still quivering boy. Then, opening the door for his sister-in-law to pass out, he added, in a lower tone, "I will wait upon you, Geneviève, as soon as I have settled this very unpleasant but by no means surprising affair."

Madame de Kergoat, strange to relate, offered no objections, and, followed by the frowning Lōic, left the room in the meekest and most obedient fashion. Perchance the boy had been right in declaring that her admiration for Rivier's manifold faculties and talents was on the wane, and that, desirous to be rid of him, she was at heart delighted for once to allow her formidable brother-in-law the upperhand. Be this as it may, she, to his intense relief, went without a murmur, and, turning to the quaking tutor, Count René said, dryly, "*À nous deux maintenant, Monsieur!*"

Rivier was gazing fixedly out of the window. He did not, however, see the exquisite vista of smooth lawns, gorgeous flower-carpet, and changing greens pierced by broken shafts of sunlight that was framed in the broad, low-silled niche. It merely served as an occupation for the troubled eyes he could not summon courage to turn towards Monsieur de Kergoat.

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

"Monsieur Rivier, the man who over-estimates the foolishness of others is himself the biggest fool concerned," the Count's calm voice was quietly saying. "I have watched you very keenly, whenever I chanced to be at Kergoat, since your arrival here, and I cannot say that I discovered any good in you; but let that pass. It was not, strictly speaking, my business to interfere, for although I am Lõic's guardian, my sister-in-law having found no fault with you, I contented myself with remaining on the alert. Lately, however, I have come to the regrettable certainty that you are a scoundrel—a fact to be deplored, not only for you, but also for Lõic—and, to be plain, I arrived here this morning for the sole purpose of giving your more than questionable behavior the recognition it deserves."

"I—I—do not understand what you mean, Monsieur le Comte," stammered Rivier.

"You understand me very well indeed, on the contrary, for you cannot doubt that I would not speak as I do had I not excellent proofs in hand. To begin with, you are affiliated to the *Comité des Socialistes*, to whom you are supposed to render valuable information concerning 'the enemies of the government,' as you tragically denominate us Nobles. That already would be a fair example of your delicacy and honor—although, of course, your conception of such matters is very different from ours; but there is worse even than that to be laid at your door. Your ideas of morality are peculiar and not acceptable in a man whose *métier* it is to bring up and train children. But enough. It suffices to call this a disgusting question. I am going to write you a check for three months' additional salary, and you will be so good as to leave Kergoat immediately."

Rivier's lips moved, but no sound came from them,

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

and he felt again for his handkerchief to wipe his clammy, ink-stained brow. Indeed, he was so completely crushed, so irretrievably convicted, that he could not even find a word to say in his own defence, but sank helplessly on the broad window-sill, while Monsieur de Kergoat, seating himself at a desk near by, took his check-book from his pocket and began to write.

In so doing he turned his back to the tutor, and then for the first time Rivier ventured to look in his direction. It was not a pleasant gaze—had Count René but known it, the blight of more than one life looked out from those eyes, and the ordinarily obsequious face was drawn in evil lines of hate and cunning. This was, after his fashion, a subtle man, who would not hesitate at any time to deal a blow in the dark, and for the present it was fortunate for Count René that the eyes bent upon his unconscious back were not loaded pistols. At last, as if weary of this profitless scrutiny, the tutor turned once more to the sun-bathed view without.

It was delicious October weather; blackbirds and thrushes were dropping their liquid notes like bubbles of exquisite melody in every tree of the park; the air was warm and suave, and laden with the fragrance of ripening fruit. Immediately before the windows extended a walled garden shaded by huge cedars of Lebanon, where a quaint, old-day peacefulness reigned supreme amid a wonderful assortment of leafy evergreens, climbing ivy, sturdy tufts of lavender, and a veritable orgy of roses of all kinds and colors—colors ranging from the warm tint of the topaz to that of the finest ruby, and following all the gradations of cream, pearl, and the delicate flush of a sleeping baby's cheek. Truly the "queen of flowers" thrived well in this sunny, sheltered nook, offering like a Royal gift its straight stems crowned with perfume,

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

advancing its flexible branches to the very crest of the ancient walls, and climbing into the drooping arms of several magnificent Weymouth pines, where the rich clusters of their satiny buds charmingly nestled, every species, according to its kind, doing its best to transform *Le Jardin du Roi*—as this delicious spot was called—into a miniature vale of Kashmir. All this superb brilliancy and beauty seemed to mock the discomfited schemer, not only by contrast with his own dark thoughts, but by symbolizing the loss his dismissal from Kergoat was to him. No, never could he hope to find so sunny, so luxurious a berth again, and it was with enraged dismay that he contemplated the future. His hopes had vanished like melting snow, and nothing but a heap of dirt was left behind.

Monsieur de Kergoat's cold, incisive voice recalled him with a start to the shame of the immediate present.

"You will please make your preparations at once," he said, rising and approaching Rivier. "In an hour a trap will be in readiness to take you to the Plouhar'zalec diligence. You will also hold no communication whatsoever with any member of this household save the valet assigned to you since the beginning of your stay."

The tutor had risen, and, although Count René plainly saw the traces of ill-repressed fury and hunted fear in his face, he paid not the slightest attention to these danger-signals flown by one whom he—the strong and honorable—considered a weak, paltry, and insignificant plotter, not worthy of a second thought. Ungraciously and mutely Rivier accepted the generous and totally undeserved gratuity handed to him, and stood motionless as a statue until the *Grand Seigneur*, with a slight inclination of the head, had left him to the solitude of the beautiful room, beside the overturned table and the variegated ink pud-

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

dles, now extended in slowly creeping rivulets and oozing towards the wellnigh priceless *tapis de la Savonnerie* covering the centre of the floor.

A little later Count René, presenting himself at the door of the small drawing-room attached to his sister-in-law's apartments, found her in a delicious tea-gown of old Venetian point and silvery tissues, standing critical-eyed between two of the tall windows, turning her head from side to side, craning her neck a little, examining—if one must confess it—the effect in her dark hair of a gorgeous band of diamonds and sapphires which, after being reset and modernized, had just arrived from Paris.

Réné bowed gravely, taking absolutely no notice of his lovely relative's absorbed studies of her beauty in the broad Louis XIV. mirror before which she continued to stand, and came to the point with his customary directness of speech.

"I have," he said, "just dismissed Rivier, who, as I have already told you fifty times, Geneviève, is not the man to intrust with Lôic's education."

"Oh, don't call me 'Geneviève'!" she interrupted him, with a droll little grimace. "It always makes me think of that celebrated lady of Brabant, so deficient in clothing and so rich in hair, who wandered eternally with her goat or her stag, or whatever it was, in lonesome forests. Can't you say '*Vivette*'? It's so much prettier and more brotherly. I wish you were not always so horribly gravel!"

"The situation," he replied, with a grim little smile, "is extremely grave, it is no use disguising that fact."

Madame de Kergöat looked up at him as he towered beside her, and the slanting sun-rays showed an expression of genuine astonishment in her magnificent eyes.

"I must ask you to believe that I exaggerate nothing.

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

The situation is very grave, though you are disinclined to believe it, just as a sailor refuses to believe that his own particular ship is unseaworthy."

Geneviève laughed. "Is all this solemnity the result of Rivier's fight with Lōic?" And again she laughed heartily. "Oh! I wish you could have seen him rise up from the débris with ink flowing like Aaron's oil to the very edge of his garments, it was so funny I was glad to find a pretext for flight, else I would have exploded right in his face."

Réné glanced sharply down at her, asking himself whether she was really as unconscious as she appeared to be, or whether she was not, after all, acting a part—a usual trick of hers when desirous of avoiding censure. But no, she was really immensely amused, of that there could be no doubt.

"I saw quite enough as it was," he returned, calmly, "but the man did not seem funny to me. He is an unutterable scoundrel, a very ugly customer indeed, and it is a thousand pities that he should ever have set his foot in this house."

"Now, really, Réné! I know that you mean well in telling me all this, but don't you think that unwittingly, perchance, you are looking a trifle too darkly at the whole matter. Rivier may not be what I first believed him to be, but from that to his being a dangerous criminal is a far cry."

"I beg your pardon! I am not inclined to be in the least melodramatic, and when I tell you that this erstwhile paragon of yours is a scoundrel of the most decided description, I thoroughly mean it. I cannot imagine what ever possessed you to engage his services."

Madame de Kergoat looked her brother-in-law up and down from the corners of her eyes.

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

"He plays the piano like Liszt, the violin like Sarasate, and is besides a veritable well of science. What more would you have in a tutor?" she replied, lightly. "I searched everywhere, I assure you, and even in the uttermost corners of the earth I could not have found a likelier pedagogue."

Réné shrugged his shoulders. "You might easily have found a better *man* in one of them, or even nearer. My dear Geneviève, it is difficult for men to do always the right thing. It is a thousand times more difficult for women. Why will you not consent to be guided by me where your children are concerned? I love them dearly; as you know, and long ago I offered you my help because I think that no woman can win through your difficulties unaided. You refused, being quite sure of your own ability to do so, but I still venture to believe that my assistance is essential."

Geneviève de Kergoat raised her head a little. She was within an ace of handing over to Réné the rod of power, which she knew in her innermost heart that she often unwisely wielded, but pride and a deep dislike of her brother-in-law's authoritative methods intervened, and in a voice too light, too hopelessly shallow for the depth of the moment, she answered: "And I think that you are quite mistaken, my dear Réné. I may have erred as far as my choice of a tutor is concerned, but I find no difficulty whatsoever in managing Lœic, who, if he is sometimes a little violent and skittish, yet obeys me far better than you imagine, and as to Marc'haid, thank goodness her husband is responsible for her pranks now, not I."

"How can you talk like that!" Monsieur de Kergoat exclaimed, with serious displeasure. "You cannot manage Lœic at all, to begin with, excepting now and then

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

with a whip, when he tries your patience too far. Your treatment of him is a regular Turkish bath: alternate douches of hot and cold. You are, if you will allow me to say so quite frankly, on the high-road to spoil one of the finest natures God ever created. As for Gäidik, you married her at fifteen to get rid of her, which was a sin, for she is the dearest as well as the prettiest little creature that ever looked out upon a wicked world from a pair of gloriously honest eyes."

"*Ne touchons pas à la Reine!*" Geneviève retorted, provokingly. "Gäidik is, of course, perfection in your eyes, since she is so much like you."

"Like me? Nonsense! She is like her father, who was the best and the handsomest man I ever knew, besides being the most honest and fearless. Yes, she is like him, and like no one else, God be praised for that!"

"A thousand thanks—that's polite and gracious," she said, with mocking plaintiveness, "but"—with a change of tone—"you never did me justice, René, and truly I do not know why you hate me so bitterly?"

René looked down at her with his cold, grave smile. The words had been admirably pronounced, the thoughtful droop of the lovely head, the dainty display of a tiny, satin-shod foot were marvellously well considered.

"I wonder why you go to the trouble of all this clever little *mise-en-scène* for me," he said, quietly.

Madame de Kergoat always became instantly furious with any one who refused to fall headlong into one of her little traps, and she gave her too clear-sighted brother-in-law a very sour and unadmiring look.

"Thank you also," she said, scornfully, "for your delicate sarcasms. There are few men in this world who can't be tamed, but you are one of them!"

"I trust, at any rate," he replied, quite unconcernedly,

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

"that what I just said has not been lost upon you, and that you will recognize the urgent necessity of speedily altering your plan of action with regard to Lōic."

With an impatient little toss of the head, she pointed to a chair. "Hadn't you better sit down and explain more clearly what it is you want me to do?" she said, crossly.

He did not sit down, but came nearer and stood by the sofa, where she had nestled among a mountain of cushions, and looked steadily at her for a few seconds.

"Well!" she said, in the same exasperating tone, arching her eyebrows inquiringly.

"Oh, come!" he remonstrated. "Don't pretend to misunderstand me. You know that Lōic is getting to be too much for you, and that it is high time to put him in hands capable of coping with his amazing force of resistance, his truly Breton stubbornness, and his extreme distaste for any sort of restraint. Now, what are you going to do about it?"

Their interviews were never either gay or cordial, and she suddenly ceased to assume even the shadow of an amiability which she was far from feeling, for she was getting angry in good earnest. "What? Oh, I don't know at all!" she answered, tapping her foot on the carpet. "Of course what I will do will be for Lōic's best interests; but I have not had time to think about it yet, nor do I care to bother about such questions just now."

"You had better think soon, nevertheless, since I have sent Rivier away."

"Very officious of you!" she said, perversely. "I had a right to be first consulted."

"Not the smallest right in such a case. The man, as I have had the honor of telling you, is an abject individual.

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

I found out that he—but such things are no concern of a woman. Pray, however, give your full attention to what does concern you. What will you do if you persist in letting Lõic gradually take the upperhand and act just as he pleases?”

She deigned no reply, for she had none ready. Moreover, her temper was rising with stormy swiftness, her very lips were losing their rose-leaf tint, and her eyes flashed like the brown diamonds they resembled.

“Surely you must see,” her brother-in-law continued, with exemplary patience, “that in the position in which I stand towards your children I am in a manner responsible for their future.”

“How exactly like you to infer that I am not capable of taking care of that myself!” she cried. “Nobody else would make such a fuss over the matter. Lõic’s future is pretty well provided for, is it not?”

“Lõic will be very rich, if that is what you mean; but a boy brought up like him may very well run through millions when once he feels the reins completely loose on his neck, and since you are still young, a great number of years may elapse before he comes into your money; moreover, that will have to be shared between Gäidik and himself when the time comes.”

“Alas, yes! But supposing he, as you so cheerfully prophesy, were to run through the money left him by his father, supposing even that he ran through all I will have to leave him—for be easy, I shall give him all that the law does not oblige me to leave to our charming Duchess—he still would have your fortune to look forward to.”

“By Heaven, that’s cool!”

Réné, as he muttered these involuntary words, stared down at her too astonished to disguise his rising disgust, and continued, icily:

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

"That is where you make yet another mistake. If Lōic turns out badly, I would sooner leave my money to—to the President of the French Republic than to him. So don't count on that. Moreover, if when he comes of age he marries contrary to your wishes, or commits some irreparable folly, won't you, yourself, be only too ready to cut down his supplies?"

Madame de Kergōat indulged in a gesture which sent an exquisite crystal bowl full of violets rolling upon the floor.

"Marry without my consent? I'd just like to see him try!" she exclaimed, furiously. "Marry against my will? Well, that's like you to think such a thing possible!"

"There are some forces stronger than yourself, and one of them will be Lōic's stubbornness if it ever comes to an open disagreement between you," René replied, stooping to repair the damage done to the pretty clusters of violets which now lay scattered far and wide over the carpet.

"You will not have an inch of ground to stand on," he continued, "when Lōic becomes altogether his own master, and being given his character, you will be running your head against a stone wall the first time you attempt seriously to oppose him."

"So you say!"

"It is not what I say, but what everybody who knows you both would say. You are accustomed to do whatever you like, but you will find out your mistake only too soon."

"Oh, do stop arranging those idiotic flowers!" she cried, jumping up and crushing the rest of them ruthlessly beneath her little feet, as she swept up and down the room in her exasperation. "Why should Lōic commit follies—why, why, why? Can you tell me that?"

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

"Assuredly I can. I have already done so, although you paid no attention to my words. Lōic is bound to commit follies because you are carefully and obstinately preparing the ground out of which follies sprout. Now, whether you are angry or not, I for one do not intend to quarrel any longer on this wearisome subject—indeed, if you say so, I will never mention it again, for whatever may be my duties towards the boy, they do not include the utter destruction of my own peace of mind in vainly trying to control your treatment of him."

She bit her lips. "I don't like your tone at all, René," she said, suddenly, in her usual voice, or one only slightly more impertinent than usual, perhaps, but so surprisingly cool and collected that he looked at her in utter surprise. All the anger of a few minutes ago had vanished, and her present accents were the faithful index of her delicately sneering face. At this René saw better than ever before the utter futility of trying to interfere between her and Lōic. The thing was already beyond his reach, and he turned away, concealing his terrible misgivings beneath a smile almost as ironical as her own.

"I am sorry if my tone displeases you, but you should occasionally remember that I am Lōic's guardian, besides being one of your trustees."

"Which of course gives you the right to annoy me in any way you please, a right you use in full, one must confess."

He looked at her in silence.

"It has been the same thing ever since your poor brother's death. You talk high-flown stuff about your duties, and you care nothing at all about the pain and sorrow you cause me."

René was now really feeling the despair a brave and generous man feels before a completely selfish and frivo-

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

lous woman. What could he do? To awaken any conscience or real good sense in her was hopeless, for there is nothing to equal the impotence of a man who attempts to cope with the elusiveness of feminine *inconscience*. Suddenly he moved a step nearer and gazed down at her with a look which made her, for a fleeting instant, lower her bold and unflinching eyes.

"You refuse to accept either my advice or assistance?" he asked, sternly, hoping still against hope.

"I do not admit that I am in need of either," she drawled, lazily, like one weary of debate upon some small matter not worthy of discussion. "There is no one living now whom I would allow to dictate to me!" Then with triumphant finality she concluded: "You are Lōic's guardian, but you are not mine, and I entirely refuse to obey your every whim or to subject myself to your interrogations and tyrannies. I shall do as I please with regard to Lōic's education, and it seems to me that until I attempt to dissipate his patrimony, the rest does not concern you."

He grew quite white, and squaring his broad shoulders with the quiet determination already so characteristic of Lōic, turned towards the door.

"I trust you will never have cause to regret this," he said, in a slightly trembling voice, and passed out of the room without another look or word.

CHAPTER VII

Red dawn! red dawn! and the clouds fast fly,
Cold white the foam-crests, gray the light,
And a sail, a sail, that glideth by
To where the east grows bright!
The tall cliff answereth rosily
The young day, born of the sky and sea,
And the shadow drops from her crown of turf
To her stony knees in the spouting surf.
Oh, sing the joy that the morrow brings!
The wondrous freight 'neath those spreading wings!
And shout with the great gale newly drawn
From the under-world,
Red dawn!

The Voyage, I.—M. M.

Two years later, on a hazy October day, Lóic and his ever lovely mamma were taking their second *déjeuner* in the breakfast-room at Kergoat — an oval apartment lined with Arras tapestries and overlooking a beautiful corner of the gardens.

Lóic, sun-tanned, deliciously refreshed by his morning dip in the sea, and shedding a pleasant aroma of salt-water and violet-scented linen, regarded his mother across the breakfast-table, set with fairest damask, palest rose old Saxe, and low Louis XIV. jardinières filled with pink heather, alternating with broad crystal shells holding superb grapes, figs, and peaches.

Through the wide-open French windows a flowering wilderness of delight was visible. Running on each side of a broad grass *allée*, herbaceous borders displayed tall

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

hollyhocks and Imperial blue lilies, while shoulder-high to them were banks of multicolored dahlias, a thin line of scarlet salvias nodding their dazzling little tassels in the light breeze, and a thick fringe of shaggy poppies, delicate in texture as the most exquisite of Chinese silk-crêpe, and as varied in hues as the rainbow itself. Below these again was a thick border of reseda, heliotrope, and lobelias, the whole fragrant, magnificent mass being backed by tall pomegranate, fuchsia, rose-laurel, and myrtle bushes still simply covered with blossoms. This portion of the gardens lay in a natural dip of the grounds, sheltered by lofty hedges of box and by patriarchal oaks, lustrous *arbousiers*—bearing great round berries red as blood and rough to the touch like shagreen leather—and graceful Italian poplars, which screened the parterres from the bitter saltness of the frequent sea-gales.

Madame de Kergoat glanced at the sumptuous landscape, the velvety lawns, the high, bending trees with the silvery light of that hazy autumn morning caught in the net-work of their rustling leaves like shreds of iridescent gauze, glanced at the orgy of perfumed color bordering the wide *allée* and then at Lôic, a fine admixture of pride with something like challenge in her smile. Indeed, the boy looked magnificently vivid, and gave one a sense of extreme vitality, of extraordinary power, and of possibilities in no way akin to unhappiness or any of the other evils predicted on a by no means forgotten occasion by his uncle. Yes, Lôic was what she termed in her heart *remarquablement bien réussi*, and conveyed the impression of a singularly well-knit union of strength, beauty, and fineness.

She paused in the act of plunging her tiny, golden spoon into an egg, and after continuing to gaze at him for a few musing seconds exclaimed, with a queer little laugh:

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

"Well, if your ogreish uncle were to see you to-day he could not but be conscious of the foolishness of his prophecies!"

Lôic, who had drawn towards him a dish of grilled sardines, pushed it mechanically away without helping himself.

"Why, Mamma, what had Uncle René prophesied?" he asked, in astonishment.

"Oh, a lot of nonsense about my being unable to manage you, and also about your future, which, according to him, was to consist of a succession of crimes too awful to contemplate!" It was a remarkably unwise speech, and she knew it; but the wayward spirit that dictated so many of her acts was strong upon her that morning, and made her move yet one step farther upon the perilous road she had followed from the first.

Lôic again turned his attention to the sardines, and, dexterously removing the spine from one of those toothsome morsels, said, indifferently enough: "I did not know that you and Uncle René had quarrelled about me. Is that why he comes here so seldom now?"

"I don't know; perhaps it is!" she replied, a little hastily. "He comes when it is necessary, which is quite often enough, for he is a singularly morose personage, this good René."

"Morose! Surely not, Mamma! He is as jolly as jolly can be when we are alone together. Why, I would rather ride or sail with him than with any boy of my own age!"

"That is a matter of opinion and of individual taste, but if you were under his iron rule, you would soon alter both, my child. Do you think that he would let you have your own way as I do, give you everything you want, and yield to all your fancies and caprices however extravagant they may be?"

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

Lôic laughed his ringing, merry laugh. "Hum! No, probably not! But you let me have my own way only when it does not interfere with yours, Mamma, and so, after all—"

Madame de Kergoat's eyes suddenly hardened.

"You are extremely ungrateful, Lôic, for you know very well that you generally do just as you please—a great deal too much so, in fact—but you will see the difference when you join the *Borda* at Brest, and exchange my lenient hand for that of its commander. He is a celebrated martinet!"

If her chances of Paradise had been at stake, the Marquise could not, that fateful morning, have resisted the temptation to say the very things she should have most avoided.

Quietly Lôic finished dismembering a jellied quail, signed to the footman "at attention" behind his mother's chair to hand him the salad, and, after carefully and slowly helping himself, said, a trifle sulkily: "Bother the *Borda*! You must not forget, my dear Mother, that I am not obliged to enter either the navy or the army! Monsieur le Curé says that I am *Soutien de Veuve* (only son of a widow), and that if I don't want to serve the republic I am exempt! Of course you are not a poor widow who needs support," he continued, placidly glancing at the luxurious breakfast-room, the tall footmen, the exquisitely appointed table; "but still I'm sure the law holds as good in our case as in that of 'Mère Pillard,' when Armand was allowed to stay home with her last year and to go on fishing, even after he drew a bad number in the conscription. I don't know whether I'll like the *Borda*, and if I don't I'll trot back here to amuse myself as best I can until I come of age."

Speechless with amazement and wrath, Madame de

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

Kergoat motioned with an almost violent gesture to the servants, who had just placed the dessert on the table, to leave the room.

"Are we to take the coffee here," Lōic asked, "or do you want it as usual on the terrace?"

"On the terrace," she replied, curtly, "but we will stay here, if you please, until you and I have come to an understanding."

"Oh, well, in that case we might as well have it brought here!" the incorrigible youngster retorted, with a shrug of his shoulders, which was anything but respectful.

Madame de Kergoat pushed back her chair, and taking a cigarette from the tiny jewelled case hanging with twenty other costly trifles on her chatelaine, lit it with a nervous twirl of the match, and her black eyes, flashing dangerously, turned on her undutiful son.

"So it appears that you intend to decide for yourself whether or not you will enter the navy?" she remarked, with fine scorn. "Pray remember that I am master here, and also the means of correction I have at my disposal, if you refuse obedience."

A singular look leaped for an instant into her son's eyes, then, after a brief pause, he coolly stretched out his hand towards one of the dishes of fruit, artistically arranged in little nests of autumn-tinted leaves, and began peeling a *pêche de Montreuil*, as if he had not heard his mother's question.

"Lōic!" she exclaimed, losing what was left of her self-control. "Lōic, don't you hear what I say?"

"Why, yes, I do; but if you are going to make a mountain out of a mole-hill, as usual, I'd much rather let the whole matter slide, since it will be a long time yet before we need make up our minds about it."

"I wonder," she said, wrathfully, "whether you real-

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

ize how insolent you are?" Her cheeks had suddenly lost their pretty color, and her voice trembled a little.

"I don't mean to be impertinent, Mamma, I assure you," was the perfectly self-possessed rejoinder; "but you are going to nag me, I know, and I don't want to spoil a day like this, just when Gäidik is coming home for a month, too! It would be absurd!"

"Gäidik! That will be another joy!" sneered Madame de Kergoat. "Upon my word, you certainly are always the most exasperating child a mother ever had to put up with; but when your sister is with you, you are ten thousand times worse, impossible as it may seem."

"I don't know why you always speak so meanly of Gäid, Mamma! You cannot help seeing that she is the best, the dearest, and the most beautiful and plucky little woman in all the world!" Lóic cried, impatiently. "It really looks as if you were jealous of her!"

At these imprudent words something snapped and gave way within her, and anger held full sway, mounting like boiling milk on a hot fire, for the boy had hit the truth. Yes, Geneviève de Kergoat was jealous—had always been jealous—of her daughter, had grudged her every success, every affection, and from the moment when the child had become her father's greatest delight and dearest treasure, to the present day, when she knew without the possibility of a doubt that Lóic loved and admired her more than he did any one else, hatred had been growing apace in this strange woman's heart. Moreover, she felt snubbed and humiliated at having been found out, and, therefore, furious with Lóic, with Gäidik, with life—even with herself.

Springing from her chair, she rushed towards him with a sharp clicking of her little, pointed heels, and before he was aware of what was coming she had him

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

by the collar, her face white as paper, her eyes literally ablaze.

"Jealous, eh!" she gasped, between clinched teeth. "That's what you think, is it?" shaking the unresisting boy like a garment. It did not last long, but while it did last the silence was broken by the sound of well-directed and exceedingly smart blows, and soon Madame de Kergoat, quite exhausted, stood holding on to the back of a high chair with trembling little jewelled hands, breathing heavily, still quite livid, and with lips strangely colorless.

Lôic, too, had grown pale. His resolute little face was set and cold, like the face of a grown man who has reached the last limit of endurance, and who is liable to become dangerous when his self-control breaks. And thus glancing at him, Madame de Kergoat felt a sudden sensation of physical fear, for disgust and deadly rage were fighting for mastery in those big, gray eyes—which she so really and so passionately loved—in a fashion which it was not pleasant to witness.

"You may do this once too often!" the boy said at last, a little breathlessly—as if he had been running hard—then placing one hand upon a heavy serving-table, standing in front of the window, he vaulted it cleanly, landed in the garden with one splendid bound, and left her to digest as best she might her first real taste of terror regarding the future, and to listen helplessly to the swiftly receding patter of his feet as he raced down a side-path leading to the park walls.

The silvery light was not as soft and delicate as it had been in the early morning, the shadows were still vaguer, less sharply outlined, and although one might as yet have ransacked the sky in vain to discover anything but fleecy, pearl-hued vapors, the air had become

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

decidedly more buoyant and keener, and the sea had turned from its warm shimmer to cold, glittering steel.

Presently, as Lōic reached a small, ivy-garlanded postern-door, opening directly upon the cliff-path, there was a violent gush of wind, strong, smelling of brine and of sea-weed, which scattered before it a cloud of dead leaves and a foam of pink and white flower-petals.

These sudden changes are not rare on this coast, and the angry boy realized that soon the storm would gather, and the rain would come down like a net-work of long strings of crystal beads—as Gäidik used to say, when they both eagerly watched for these swift *bourasques* in the happy days of what now seemed to him so very long ago.

“Thank God, she’ll be here to-night!” he muttered, squaring his shoulders, and, having closed the postern carefully behind him, he headed for the “Pointe de Ker-gōat,” one of the most rugged and dangerous promontories of that line of dangerous cliffs.

His whole being was in a turmoil, and he gazed fiercely into space clinching and unclenching his fists, and actually grinding his teeth—short and dazzlingly white like those of a finely bred puppy.

When he turned the first angle of the great rock, which bears the encouraging name of *Bac’h ar Ab-Vor* (Fang of the sea), he saw, much to his joy, for this promise of tempest chimed in well with his mood, that the horizon and the distant islands were swiftly becoming lapped in thick, black clouds, which spread with astonishing rapidity, spread and rose, cancelling the pale sky, and covering the murmuring waters with a strange and uncanny curtain of sombre folds and coppery lights.

With a strange sort of avidity Lōic drew into his lungs the pungency of the rising waves, his head held high, his

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

lithe, active form defined in lines of perfect strength and symmetry as he walked boldly on the very edge of the sheer drop of over two hundred feet, leaning his whole weight against the now rapidly freshening wind. Gradually the harsh frown of anger died away from his handsome little face, and he began to hum the first lines of the terrible *Chant du Raz* — the wildest chant in all Brittany:

“Tân! Tân! gwell tarânn! tân!
Dir! Tân! gwàd hâc gwin adrân!”

Fire! Fire! wind! thunder! fire!
Steel! Fire! blood and tempest!

the savage words and weird melody cutting sharply through the now tumultuous atmosphere because attuned by their antique composer to that very purpose. Two or three big drops splashed in his eyes, and then the deluge began, and the reckless force of the bursting storm was heralded by the customary snarls and hoarse gurgles of the tormented wind, accompanied by the rapid crepitation of the rain against the stone-hewn path, which sounded as if a troop of iron-shod kourrigans were viciously stamping and dancing upon it.

It was a splendid transformation scene, and Lœic exulted in it, singing louder and louder and louder, as the waves began to dash hungrily against the *falaise* and the mews flew screeching in all directions above and below the towering verge.

“*Mauvais temps ça, M'sieu' l'Marquis? Pour sûr n'sallons voir un grain!*” a coast-guard called out to him from his little *guêrite* poised like a lump of brown earth on the very lip of the cliff.

“*Tant-mieux,*” Lœic shouted back, running up to the

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

quaint, clumsy sod-shelter, and diving into it like a rabbit into his burrow. "The best of it," he continued, laughing, "is that I'm going to drive to Pernac to fetch Gäidik, who is arriving to-night. Won't it be a lark?"

"Madame la Duchesse is coming? That's good, that's good!" the *douanier* cried, rubbing his hands joyfully, his weather-beaten face all smiles beneath the pointed hood of his long military storm-coat. "And so you are going in this weather all the way to Pernac, M'sieu' l'Marquis? You'll have a job, that's certain!"

"I'll like it immensely, Guènnék—and, by-the-way, I've got to go back and get ready now!" Lõic cheerfully declared, all his good temper restored, as he glanced at his watch and saw that the long-desired hour was at hand. "I ordered the horses for two o'clock sharp, and it's a good trot from here to the house."

"Won't you take my *caban*, M'sieu' Lõic?" the man asked, eagerly, beginning to unfasten his heavy coat. "You'll be drenched to the bones, and I'm going to be off duty directly, so you needn't mind my catching cold." This with a ringing laugh at the idea of *his* ever catching cold.

"No, Guènnék, your coat would be too large for me, and I can run much better as I am, so good-bye and good-luck to you! To-morrow I'll bring Gäidik to see your kids!" With which pleasing promise M'sieu' l'Marquis scampered off at a speed of ten miles an hour through the driving rain.

"*Un si'crans p'tit gosse!*" the *douanier* muttered beneath his long blond mustaches, as, leaning on his carbine, he bent forward to watch the gallant little figure bounding as buoyantly as a cork on a whirlpool along the extreme edge of the grim rock-rampart.

The wind moaned, howled, and hooted, and when Lõic

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

let himself in by the postern-door the beautiful, shady paths were running with muddy brooklets, and in one or two places whole branches had been broken from the trees and rested on a snow of pink and white rose-leaves torn from their bending, rustling stems. "What a pity!" thought the hurrying boy, with a little pang of regret at the possibility of Gáidik's not finding Kergöat in all its glory. Old Brére, gardener since his grandfather's time, pottering about in the wet, would have detained him with a similar lamentation, but laughingly dodging him and jumping over dozens of little pools hollowed into the soupy gravel, he cleared the last lawn at a gallop, and raced up-stairs to his own rooms by a back way, undesirous to meet his mother, and have her perchance rescind her permission about the long drive to fetch his beloved sister.

Half an hour later, wearing a long four-in-hand coat and a Glengarry cap, he marched into the stable-yard and apostrophized the *maitre d'Ecurie*, who, with hands thrust deep in pockets, was graciously surveying the harnessing of four magnificent bays.

"Please tell my mother, Parker, that I am taking Gradlon and Hoël with me, and that we will probably be late on account of the weather," he said, drawing on his driving-gloves and casting a knowing glance at the heavy sky.

"It has rained in torrents farther up-country, My Lord," the English stable-master—who was a personage of much importance at Kergöat—said, somewhat apprehensively. "The roads will be terrible by to-night. Had I not better accompany Your Lordship myself?"

This was a great concession on the part of this imposing dignitary, and Löic knew it, so he thanked him with all proper appreciation, but firmly declined the



OLD BRÈRE
The gardener at Kergoat

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

honor. Swinging himself upon the high seat, he grasped the ribbons and drove out of the yard in so correct and masterful a fashion that even the hypercritical Mr. Parker could find no fault with the classicism of his style, but as soon as he was out of sight he spun down the broad causeway, and round the perilous curves where it clings to the almost vertical cliff-side, at a pace which rendered the two ordinarily impassive grooms behind him scarcely able to conceal their amusement and admiration.

In the north the sky was clearer than it had been, but the dark canopy of clouds, vast and resembling bales upon bales of leaden-hued cotton-wool, still clung densely overhead, and a fine, determined rain had set in, blurring the whole landscape.

Soon the last buttressed angle of the park wall, all shaggy-mantled in a delicious overgrowth of creepers and ivy, was left behind, and the horses settled into their road-pace, while Lōic, with a mischievous grimace, looked back over his shoulder at the stately castle towering towards the brooding heavens, its blue- and -silver banner streaming out upon the wind that was once more beginning to liven up things.

"What luck! What amazing luck, that I was not stopped!" he thought, as with a sense of intoxicating liberty and all-pervading delight he saw the great house disappear behind its screen of trees and verdure.

The long drive to Pernac, the nearest railway station, was in itself no joke even in good weather, but the young master of Kergōat enjoyed every inch of it, and his heart beat high with the thought of soon seeing his Gâidik again. Moreover, the idea of going alone, and in this grown-up way, to meet her, had an undeniable charm for the adventurous, independent boy, so he listened with the utmost cheerfulness to the ever-rising

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

clamor of the sea and the dismal groans of the wind-tormented trees, nor did the cold moisture of the clinging atmosphere in the least chill his merriness.

Be it said also to his honor that he displayed remarkable science and judgment in saving his cattle from any possible mishap, or even from unnecessary fatigue, and finally the task was accomplished when, just as the day drew to a close, he reached the antique and eminently picturesque little hostelry of the *Duchesse Anne*, where he left the horses in the care of Hoël, and went on with Gradlon to meet the Paris express.

The little station of Pernac, which stands like a pariah outside the feudal walls of the little town, is the dullest, dreariest, and—excepting when a train is actually on its narrow, metallised frontage—the most silent spot on earth. A few grave peasant women, knitting as they sat beneath the flickering oil-lamps, wearily waiting for the “fish-train” to bring back the empty baskets sent at dawn to Vannes and other big Breton market-cities, were its sole occupants, together with a few sleepy children crouching at their feet, while outside on the *Landes* small black cows and sturdy little black pigs with aggressive sable snouts wandered about in the short, salty grass among clumps of shaggy gorse, and the eternal, blackberry-grown, loose stone walls that are the fences of that region. The blue-slate roof of the station itself looked exceeding grim and naked in spite of the loyal efforts of a meagre, ragged white rose to clamber towards its one brick chimney, and as the station-master, an old man much loved and esteemed in Pernac, came out to meet him, Lōic could not help thinking that his lot must not always be a very enviable one.

“Ah, Monsieur le Marquis!” said this cheery personage, rubbing his hands with a good-humor which no outward

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

circumstances of weather or like discomforts could ever impair. "So Madame la Duchesse is arriving to-night? I was advised this morning that I would have to sidetrack her private car until the next express, which will take it away again. You'll be mighty glad to see her again, won't you? It must be a year since she was here last?"

"Yes, Monsieur Guyarmark, a whole year!" Lœic replied, his eyes dancing with joyful anticipation, "but of course I spent two months with her last winter at Cannes—still—oh yes, I *will* be glad to see her again!" and he he drew a long, tremulous breath of delight.

The night was approaching, and so gloomy was the tempestuous sky that darkness was setting in two hours earlier than usual. As the express at last came tearing along the interminable bleakness of the plain, there was a continual sound of splashing waters, audible even above the noise of its polished wheels and throbbing engine. It only paused for a second to allow the uncoupling of the private car from its farthest end, and moved rapidly on again, leaving it stranded in front of Monsieur Guyarmark's tiny plot of variegated petunias.

With a shout of welcome Lœic rushed towards it, and was met on the steps by a dainty little figure wearing a long, tight-fitting tan coat, the quaint little hood of which was partly drawn over a thick coronal of auburn braids, sparkling where the light of a lamp caught them like a sort of coppery glory.

"Gaid!"

"Lœic!"

The brother and sister were locked fast in each other's arms, both almost crying with the joy of this reunion, the two pairs of identical gray eyes dark with the intense feeling which no one else in the world could arouse in

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

either of them, for these two were celebrated for their extraordinary coldness!

"So it is you, at last, Honeylocks?" Lõic repeated for the twentieth time, when, a few minutes later, they sat down close together on one of the luxurious couches in the salon of the Duchess's little rolling palace.

"Now, what a question!" protested Gäidik, laughing from sheer lightness of heart. "Do you expect me to vouch for my identity?"

"I don't know; you look exactly as if you had stepped out of some fourteenth-century painting, with your long, peak-hooded surtout like that of an ancient *arbalétrier*," and again he hugged her like a bear, stopping to eye her in critical enjoyment, his sunny head cocked a little on one side.

"Shall we set out at once?" he asked, bringing this examination abruptly to an end; "or do you want to try the cooking of the *Duchesse Anne*?"

"Nothing of the kind! We'll dine here quickly and then take the road; but tell me, Lõic *Ab-Vor*, are you alone?"

"Yes, that's the fun of it; they did let me come alone—that is, with Gradlon and Hoël sitting solemnly behind me; by-the-way, poor Gradlon is out there in the rain eating his heart out for a glimpse of you."

"Oh, Lõic!" and with one of her swift, graceful darts the little Duchess rushed out on the platform, calling: "Gradlon! Gradlon! Where are you?" and all but fell in his arms as he came running out of the gloom at the sound of her dearly beloved voice.

By this time Gäidik's own servants had hastily dished up a succulent little meal, to which she and Lõic sat down with ravenous appetites.

Square and quite spacious was the little salon, the

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

ceiling and the walls panelled in tan-colored leather, the floor covered with a thick Aubusson carpet of pale turquoise woven with the Kergôat and d'Aspremont arms, the plate-glass windows surrounded by garlands of ivy growing in broad, turquoise-blue jardinières. Everywhere were scattered comfortable tan leather arm-chairs and settees, and two stout tables carved out of light-colored oak, one littered with books and periodicals, the other exquisitely set with glittering silver, crystal, and snowy napery, and graced by an immense bunch of violets, stood on each side of a round ottoman, from the midst of which emerged a bronze-vased palm.

Bending forward, Gâidik, who had cast off her cloak and revealed an admirably made but severely plain white cloth gown, peeped into a covered dish.

"*Omelette aux Cèpes!*" she cried, joyously. "Delicious! And if it hadn't been for my sagacity and forethought, do you know what you would have had? Well, grilled lobster to begin with—imagine bringing lobsters to Brittany; it's like coals to Newcastle—travelled lobsters, lobsters who have seen the world—that's what you would have had!" she declared, tragically. "But I threw myself into the breach and forbade such heresy. I sent my compliments to Celestin—Celestin, you will remember, is my travelling chef, who, like his lobsters, has seen much country—and bade him treat my long-lost brother's stomach with exceptional tenderness and more *à propos*. Hence the *omelette aux Cèpes*, which is to be followed by plain, unadulterated, honest, truffled beef-steak, salad, chocolate *éclairs*—one of your predilections, if I am correct—fruit, and coffee, with a dash of candied violets—my favorite tipple—to give the menu a distinguished finish. Now, what do you say?"

Lôic piled his plate with omelet. "You're a wonder!

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

Sit up and tie your napkin round your neck, as Fräulein Camilla used to tell you at every meal. Good old Camilla! I wonder if she's alive still, or if the worry of finishing your education induced slow decline! This omelet really isn't bad; you'd better take some more before I devour it all."

But Gäidik declined a second helping, and Lōic devoured it all.

"Come, Noble Dame!" he exhorted, selecting the most truffled portions from the "honest" beefsteak for her consumption, "we have a long road before us, and, since I am pretty certain that you will want to drive the bays, you'd better fortify yourself."

"The bays! Of course I'll drive them. Are they still as frisky as of yore?"

"More so. They labor under a sort of constantly foiled yearning to precipitate themselves into the hedges and ditches. You'll have to look sharp, too, because they are afraid of the dark, and shy at it like superstitious old maids—but what's that, don't you want some *éclair*s, nor even one or two 'dashes' of your favorite candied violets?"

Gäidik had risen, and, seating herself on the arm of her brother's chair, she now with calculated deliberation produced her cigarette-case. "No, I'm too pleased to eat much. Give me a match, Nimbletongue, and as soon as you have quite satisfied your indecent appetite we will make a rush for home, which—being given the howling wind and avalanches of water I hear buffeting our humble refuge—we will reach when God pleases."

Indeed, the weather had grown gradually "dirtier" and "dirtier"; the wind was increasing, while the dense mass of tossing clouds had closed in, and now overspread every corner of the sky with an impenetrable sable pall.

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

"Are your oil-skins where your maid can easily reach them?" Lōic asked, a little anxiously, for even this reckless youth was beginning to see that this was no night in which to drive a woman—even his tomboy sister—for mile upon mile of storm-lashed road. Gäidik, however, thought otherwise, and laughed his dawning fears away, earnestly begging him to remember that she was not an ordinary fine lady to be terrified by a puff of wind, and then, noticing the unusual gravity of his eyes, she ended her peroration by throwing her arms round his neck with a "*Mon petit Frérot, je t'aime, va!*" which made him so happy that he forgot all save the intense joy of having her close to him again.

A cluster of people had gathered round the deeply mullioned and exquisitely carved porch of the little hostelry to see them depart, and some of them expressed encouraging doubts as to the safety of the roads, telling of great trees which had been uprooted and of slates flying from roofs, but it was now too late for Gäidik and Lōic to alter their plans, even if they had been so inclined, and contenting themselves with recommending to the coachman in charge of the servants and the luggage-fourgon to drive very cautiously by the longer but safer inland road, they started as merrily as if the night had been an idyllic and gloriously moonlit one.

As they left the shelter of the little town behind them, however, the wind, which was blowing dead on shore from the maddened sea, began to have its effects, and the horses made serious difficulties about facing its terrors.

"Won't you let me drive?" Lōic shouted, as he watched the little hands so steadily and coaxingly gripping the ribbons.

"Not a bit of it!" Gäidik shouted back; "but here, hold

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

the brutes while I slip off my rings. You can stick them in your pocket." And this once done she settled to her task once more with all her old energy and stubbornness of purpose, never once faltering or hesitating, even when the leaders turned right-about-face or came to a dead stop after showing a decided predilection for travelling awhile on their hind-legs.

As they struggled on nearer and nearer to the sea, powdered spray and salty rain were carried before the hurricane and beat upon their faces like showers of sharp needles, while the blinding wind and flying particles of sand made the situation a very bad one for the brother and sister on their high perch. Evidently, if such a wind could rise, it was still rising, and the deafening tumult of the waves—notwithstanding the quite respectable distance still intervening between the shore and the road they followed—became something fearful. Talking was, of course, quite out of the question; all that could be achieved was to guide the horses as prudently as possible along the dark, dismal *chaussée*, strewn thickly, even at that height above the water, with shredded, slippery sea-weed, and patched with white puddles lashed into miniature whirlpools by the shrieking wind.

At Kervallet, a tiny hamlet a little over half-way, they stopped for a few moments to breathe the horses and have them hastily rubbed down without unharnessing, and there a couple of grizzled old salts told them that four sardine-boats had gone down with all hands on the rocks of Plouharnac, a few miles away, shaking their heads sadly as they spoke before the roaring fire of the inn kitchen, where sides of bacon and long garlands of onions and dried herbs hung from the smoky rafters, and where some women whose husbands and sons were even then out in their *Sinagots*—which, for all they knew, might already

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

have foundered amid the high, watery walls rolling in with the crash of thunder against the jagged teeth of the terrible Ar-Zod reefs—were sobbing bitterly, their aprons thrown over their white *coiffes*.

With saddened hearts the brother and sister once more turned their faces to the tempest, hoping that as the night advanced the wind would moderate sufficiently to allow the fishing-boats to run to shelter. An old inhabitant of Kervallet accompanied them to the door, slowly enumerating in a doleful, dirgelike mumble the names of twenty-two *Sinagots* wrecked within three short years in plain sight of the very porch where they now stood; and yet more painfully impressed by this timely information, they stumbled towards their snorting, champing horses, anxiously peering out to sea, though the darkness was too intense to allow them to discern anything save a wild confusion of towering hills and bastions of a slightly paler hue than the inky sky, which they knew were the maddened waves rushing to the assault of the cliffs. They shook hands all round, with that subtle and silent fellowship which draws together all coast Bretons under such circumstances, and, without any clear idea of how their own venture would terminate, started off to try and make the best of it, their square chins thrust forward, their resolute lips set, their eyes impassive in an exact similarity of expression which would have seemed almost ludicrous to an observer had there been one there.

In the difficulty of hearing anything but winds and waves, in the unspeakable confusion of the heavens and the solid earth, and wearied by their now nearly breathless efforts to resist the onslaughts of the storm, they plodded silently onward, always onward, exchanging places now and then when one pair of hands grew too

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

numbed to retain the necessary delicate feel of the horses' mouths. All through the wild tumult of that September night they did what was necessary, quite simply, with the impassiveness which was in keeping with the above-mentioned square chins and resolute eyes, and when at last, after again and again walking with Gradlon and Hoël beside the trembling, frightened horses to lead and reassure them, they saw the lights of Kergoat twinkling dimly through the flying sand and spindrift, they had nothing to say, although each drew a sharp little sigh of relief.

It was funny, after all this, as Lōic said, to enter the magnificent green-and-gold inner hall, with its gorgeous tapestries, its heavy *Verdure Flamande* curtains, its immense emblazoned twin fireplaces, in which roaring logs were burning, and where all was so calm and full of quiet, luxurious security. Wet as they were, they sat down before the huge upper hearth, Gaidik, leaning back in a deep easy-chair, her tired little hands folded in her lap, her pretty little feet resting on the andirons, smiling contemplatively up at Lōic from under the tossed and dishevelled abundance of her tawny hair.

Here a courteously frigid little note, penned by their fond mother before retiring to her bed, was brought to them, expressing regrets that a severe headache, caused no doubt by the very trying storm, should have deprived her of the pleasure of joining them at the supper which stood in readiness.

Lōic laughed as he read over his sister's shoulder.

"What's the matter?" she asked, her own lips twitching slightly.

"Nothing much. I'm merely amused," he replied.

Gaidik sat up.

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

“Well, you know, Frérot, it's past two o'clock.” She fixed him with her humorous, brilliant eyes.

“Of course,” he acquiesced. “I had forgotten that detail—also that nothing ever surprises you.” He took her hand, bent over it with the manner of a courtier of Louis XIV.'s time, and touched it almost reverently with his lips, for even to his boyish mind the ever-forgiving attitude of the gracious little figure in the huge easy-chair had something that was infinitely beautiful.

And after that came supper, and a much-needed rest for these two quaint little survivals from a by-gone age.

CHAPTER VIII

You feed him high, you let him range
Unfenced, unfettered; let the change
Of wood and pasture, dale and hill,
Waken old instincts sleeping still;
The bright eyes through the tangled mane
Gaze the red dawn upon the plain;
The quivering nostrils, velvet-skinned,
Drink the strange promptings of the wind,
Till with the sweep of wild sea wings
Each steel-web muscle plays and swings;
Till stubborn, fierce, and swift doth he
Move like a wave upon the sea.
Then, if he burst the bridle-rein,
You cry, "Our care is all in vain!
The brute, he's vicious! Work him hard!"

* * * * *
And kill him in the breaking-yard.

M. M.

WHEN they awoke, six hours later, great gusts of wind were still sweeping around Kergoat with undiminished vigor, rattling the thick mantle of ivy-leaves on the crenellated towers, and ending in strange, wailing noises which sounded like the despairing cries of thousands of drowning creatures. Whenever a door or window was opened for a moment it let in fierce blasts that filled the long corridors and galleries and threatened to tear the ancient tapestries from the walls. A true wild day of Brittany, a day with the dark-green seas yawning in fathomless graves, and the cruel hissing of the water filling every moment of lull between the appalling shrieks

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

of the tempest. The rocky escarpments at the base of the castle cliff gleamed intermittently like steel fangs in the slaver of the waves, beneath the vague, diffused, stormy light of a sky where great hosts of sombre clouds were hurled together with the force and stubbornness of unceasingly attacking armies.

It was ten o'clock, fires burned brightly on every hearth within the grim old sea-fortress, flashing fitfully on the grandeur of its halls and rooms, and upon the banks of exotics which perfumed its every embrasure. Inside peace and luxury reigned supreme, with no sound higher than the low, murmuring voices of well-trained servants walking softly to and fro in the swift accomplishment of their various duties; outside all was noise and confusion, the angry roar of the ocean answering the mad challenge of the wind with a violence equal to its own.

The gale, however, was nearing its height—that is, it was blowing even harder than it had blown all through the long, howling, waiting night, hurling itself into the embayments of the towering cliffs, where it seemed to concentrate funnel-wise, shredding the waves into a scattered dust of foam and tearing destructively through the trees of the park. When Nature is wroth in Brittany, she speaks in no uncertain voice.

While sitting at breakfast Gaidik and Lōic were summoned to poor old Mère Corentine's death-bed. She was a woman of many sorrows, to whom life had been harsh and unkind, for, as already told, her daughter Jeannik was all that was left to her of a once splendid family. Her handsome, stalwart boys had been very much like their father—a celebrated *Beau gars*, who, when he had indulged in too many *bolées de cidre* and *petit verres*—as is, alas! the habit of many Breton fisher-

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

men and salt-workers to do—was wont to be violent in his angers and intolerant of all reproach. Poor Corentine had remained somewhat taciturn and very grave since this dreaded but yet dearly beloved husband's disappearance in a white squall off the Kergoat rocks many years before. She had courageously and untiringly earned her own and her children's living by carrying enormous wooden bowls of salt on her head at night from the *Marais*—an arduous and ill-paid labor—or, when this failed her, by knitting for the sailors of the village those amazingly enduring *tricots* of intricate patterns which are their Sunday and week-day garb, by spinning the wool wherewith *bélinge* * is made, by making fishing-nets, and sewing sails, the coarse canvas of which caused even her strong fingers to bleed. To the last she had been active and very hardy, disdaining to accept the help of her rich son-in-law, and had lived in a stern, grim fashion that made her neighbors a little afraid of her. After the *Mer Sauvage* had taken all her sons, and ever since Jeannik's marriage, she had dwelt alone with her dead memories. Often she would bolt her door and shut out the sight of the moon-lit sea and the sombre reefs that hid her dead, and wistfully remember how she had watched and waited for them on many a stormy night when they were out deep-water fishing, or even, when for once in a way they were ashore, how she had listened in vain for their uncertain steps while they lingered in the *cabaret*, ruining their tempers and their healths with too oft-repeated doses of *calvados*, † that curse of the Breton coast. They are good fellows, our Breton fishermen, stanch and loyal as steel, but after a heavy catch they drink invariably too much, and then

* A coarse, almost indestructible linsey-woolsey, the universal wear of the peasantry.

† A kind of strong brandy.

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

they become truly terrible. That is a fact which cannot, alas! be denied, and it takes a born Breton—or Bretonne—to feel the pulse of that strange people beat, to judge them rightly, and to love them as they deserve to be loved, in spite of this one frightful drawback.

Now, however, Mère Corentine's course was run, and soon she would rejoin her loved ones where there is no more sea; but before her weary eyes closed forever she wished once more to look upon the faces of her dear young Seigneurs, wherefore a little *mousse* had been sent in haste to the castle in quest of them.

Hurrying through the narrow village street—since the path along the beach was quite impracticable with a northwest tide racing in before a northwesterly wind—Gaidik and Loïc were forced to hold on to each other for support against the terrible tempest blasts, and occasionally stop to gasp for breath. To the east there were miles of impassable shore, of unbroken and unscalable cliff; to the west there was the same, and right in front of them a hundred resistless cross-currents were piling up waves upon waves to a height almost unbelievable.

“How magnificent!” Gaidik cried, pausing to wipe the rain and driving spindrift from her eyes, and gazing at the strange, ghostly light lying on the face of the waters—that light which landsmen never see.

They were both clad from head to foot in gleaming oil-skins, the strings of their sou'westers solidly tied beneath their chins, and though subdued in spirit by their sad errand, they enjoyed this struggle against the storm as if they had not already had their fill of it during the night. In a short lull they pushed on, Laïc acquiescing by a mere appreciative nod, for what with the wind and the ear-flaps of the sou'westers it was hard to make one's self heard though their two faces almost touched.

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

Now and again when they lost the shelter of the straggling houses they literally could not stand, and were forced to crouch at the foot of the low stone walls bordering both sides of the way, until another lull permitted them to proceed; but they laughed even when they stumbled and fell—as several times happened to both—upon the sea-weed-littered ground, casting as soon as they were up again looks of heart-felt admiration on the crests of foam and spray galloping landward, and the terrifying sky showing livid through furiously tossing black clouds.

It was raining hard again when they at last reached the little granite house where their old friend was fighting her last fight, her tired, knotted hands crossed patiently on her breast, her sculptural features bleached by illness to a far greater whiteness than that of her coarse, scrupulously clean pillow. Outside the door Hervé's dog was howling incessantly.

Lôic and Gäidik entered with a silent greeting to Jeannik, who, a flaxen-haired baby in her lap and one but little larger clinging to her skirts, was sitting in the hearth corner knitting mechanically and nervously, while large tears followed one another slowly and ceaselessly down her pretty but already somewhat faded face. Near by sat old Mère Vaillant—well named for one who was midwife, sick-nurse, and layer-out of the dead for all the district round—wrapped in professional calm.

Swiftly Gäidik crossed to the bedside, and, stooping over the dying woman, said, gently, "Do you know me, Mère Corentine?"

The glazed eyes opened wide, and the white lips whispered, "Yes, I know you, my little girl—I know you," and she gazed dimly from the Duchess to Lôic, who stood at

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

the foot of her bed with a world of awe and sympathy on his young face.

Strange shadows were flickering about the dusky little room, where years before Jeannik had donned her brilliant wedding garments. Now and again a fitful gleam from the logs of drift-wood, which had been thrown on the ever-present turf fire, threw into high relief the handsome clothes-press and carved *Bahuts*, then died away again, leaving the small, stone-walled space to the mercy of the sad storm-light filtering parsimoniously through the creeper-grown *lucarne*.

A wild gust shook the solid house, and Mère Corentine murmured: "The storm—the storm that took all my sons away! It is coming for me now!" Gaidik was holding the poor, hard-working hand between her little, jewelled fingers, caressing it softly. "The waves were their winding-sheet, but I must be put into the ground," the poor old woman continued, with that dread of being thrust into the earth which every coast Breton has at his or her heart, for they deem the ocean their only fitting sepulchre. "The sea is our grave," they all say, "but the great water that tosses our drowned bodies about will wash them into a safe haven, aided by true Breton prayers for our souls." She too, therefore, would rather have died in that sea which had been at once her greatest enemy and her unfailing source of livelihood through seventy years of existence; but one does not choose one's mode of departure, and to that as to other things she was trying to be resigned.

Jeannik, clasping her baby close in her arms, had risen and was courageously trying to control her sobs, while her other little one pulled at her apron whimpering in a helpless and instinctive manner. Lōic stooped and lifted it, holding it against his shoulder where it nestled con-

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

tentedly, one chubby hand laid confidently against his neck.

"Has Monsieur le Curé been here?" Gäidik asked, in a whisper.

A faint gleam of troubled intelligence overspread Mère Corentine's wan features. "Ah, yes!" she murmured, her fingers picking feebly at the beads of the rosary lying upon her breast. "He gave me my passports all complete, Monsieur le Recteur!" and the shadow of a smile hovered on her once stern face. She was *en règle* with the Almighty was Mère Corentine—ay, and had long been so if the truth were told, and fortunately for her at this hour she knew it.

Presently her lips moved again, and she began to mutter disconnected sentences in that tone of utter self-absorption which characterizes the sayings of those who are but half conscious and very near to the end.

"Is that you, Jeannik?" she whispered, her fingers creeping lovingly over Gäidik's tawny braids. "Ah, no! there is no cap, it is Mam'zelle Gäidik who is come back to us—our own little Lady—they did say she was married and not very happy—but it can't be true—she's too good to be made to weep, too—our little Mam'zelle Gäidik—" Her trembling, stiffened fingers still stroked the kneeling Duchess's wonderful hair. The little boy had ceased to whimper, soothed and lulled by the low-murmured words of this poor old creature, whose long, patient, unrewarded life was about to cease. She had lived there through childhood and girlhood and womanhood, had Mère Corentine, working always through so many changes of season, bearing her burdens with humble heroism, and now but a few short hours intervened between so much suffering and the death that to age and pain is a release. With wide-open, unseeing eyes she still muttered:

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

"Do you remember the day of my wedding, Mam'zelle Gäidik—Monsieur le Marquis led me to church—that was your grandfather—it seems but yesterday—but it's true you can't remember; it was our little Seigneur who led Jeannik to church—is he here also, M'sieu' Lōic?"

"Yes, I'm here, Mère Corentine," Lōic said, in a low voice, drawing nearer, his face as white as Jeannik's own as he bent over the bed.

Life was going out rapidly as the flame sinks in a lamp whose oil is all spent, and it was a sad sight to witness, this last struggle of the strong, vigorous frame, the surrender of that powerful will that had warded off weakness and death so bravely, and now bent all suddenly as a hardy tree will bend after years of resistance to wind and storm—bend but once and forever. The faded lips moved still, but the restless mind was taking a different turn. "Last night I saw my boys again—I saw them—they were shouting and singing and pouring wine down their throats—their father came in—my handsome Yan—he looked at me—and do you know what looked through his eyes—a devil—a devil who giped at me and mocked me—the devil of drink, drink that destroys all our *gars* and makes us, the innocent, suffer hell-pains—" She paused once more, strange, wild thoughts hurtling through the chaos of her shattered reason, a violent trembling shaking her thin, exhausted frame.

"Come, Mère Corentine," Gäidik urged, wiping the cold sweat of agony from her old friend's forehead, "look at us who are all here around you. There are no devils, only your children and Lōic and I, Gäidik, your little Mam'zelle Gäidik!"

But the old woman drew away with sudden impatience from her touch.

"No, no!" she wailed. "I must bring my boys home

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

—when they sober up we shall be happy again—something tells me I must bring them home now—it's drink ruins them—drink, always drink—they are good boys, and so was my Yan—and so fine-looking and strong, but drink made them brutal and wicked—it beckoned to them, and they went—beware of it—it maddens men—pray on your knees to be spared—pray, pray—” And with amazing strength she suddenly raised herself up in bed, pointing with a wide, out-stretched arm directly towards Lōic. The clear rays of a fitful spirt of flame from the hearth momentarily illumined the boy's delicate, proud features, throwing them into bold relief like an ivory cameo against the dark background, and at the sight the dying woman cried out: “Save him! Save him!” Then with a great shriek, as if she had seen some grim vision, she fell heavily back in Găidik's out-stretched arms.

A tearless sob caught the little Duchess's breath as she laid the quivering form on the pillows. Perhaps all the silent agony through which she was herself to pass weighed for a second upon her at that moment, and she, the brave and enduring, shrank and quivered as though stricken to the heart. Passion, sorrow, impotent efforts, wild regret, the cruel stripes of an unmerited scourge seemed to burn through the floating shadows around her, like jeering mockeries of her brilliant present, and turning from the motionless form on the bed she threw her arms around Lōic. His own limbs were shaking, his lips were colorless, his forehead was wet with cold perspiration, and he stretched out his hands towards her imploringly. “Come away, Găid,” he whispered. “I can't bear to look at her eyes!”

“Yes,” she whispered back, “I'm coming!”

Quickly she bent over Mère Corentine, took the

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

poor, hard-worked hand in her firm young grasp once more, felt for its fluttering pulse, and with a gentle touch of farewell she left the now unconscious woman and poor, terrified Jeannik in the care of Mère Vaillant, and drew Lōic out of the little house into the roar of the surf and the wind.

She did not utter a word as they struggled up the rain-lashed path, contenting herself with pressing her brother's arm closely within hers. She knew by instinct that this was all that was needed, and that the thoroughly unnerved boy understood this mute sympathy; nor did either of them attempt to speak as with a common accord they turned away from the village and passed on to a narrow pathway across the heath leading to a group of tall menhirs that raised their giant heads at the summit of a particularly wild and lofty rampart of cliffs.

The storm had indeed done its work thoroughly, for it is a solemn fact that for over a mile and a half inland the wind-borne froth of the waves lay on the ground like banks of ivory-tinted snow, and as Lōic and Gāidik advanced they waded through this soft, clinging mass up to their very hips. The tremendous sea itself still came rolling in, dashing and thundering against the *jalaises*, as if eager to engulf the whole trembling world, while the receding billows, when they swept back with a hoarse roar, scooped yawning caverns out of the loose shingle of the beaches.

With infinite exertion they succeeded in doubling the point—a feat which none but Bretons could have accomplished under such circumstances—and reached the cruel *Baie de Gwesnoc'h*, which just then presented a spectacle well worthy of all their labors. Beneath the dull, opaque light of that wild morning the sacred stones

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

adopted strange and terrifying shapes, like a troop of petrified monsters eternally mounting guard over that virile coast of Armorica, for the most part built up of bold promontories daring the desperate ocean.

A fierce melancholy, without hope, without mercy, without consolation seemed to envelop the whole desolate spot, and yet, sombre though it was, it seemed far more beautiful to the two on-lookers than any flowery and sunlit landscape could have been. A curious sense of awe fell upon them as, sheltered behind a towering menhir, they witnessed the uproar and fury that swept the waves apart in dark, gliddery hollows, and then piled them up again in huge climbing walls that strove ever higher and higher towards their lofty hiding-place. Their lips were bitter with salt, their cheeks were wet with the flying foam, but these few moments, spent face to face with the grandeur of that scene, brought them just the revivifying tonic they needed, and they felt strangely comforted as they looked upon the wrath of the ocean, familiar to their eyes from earliest babyhood, and which had lent to both their natures something of its depth and force to do and to endure.

For half an hour longer they stood there, listening to the clamor of sea and sky, and then, aided this time by the grand sweeps of the wind, ran home hand-in-hand as they had done so many times before on similar days of storm.

All the live-long day the storm continued to rage pitilessly, and not by word or glance did Gaidik allude to the distressing scene which had taken place that morning at Mère Corentine's death-bed. It was characteristic of her love for Lóic to wait for him to speak first, if he so wished to do, and if, as she feared, he had been painfully impressed by the weirdness and spiritual horror of those last moments.



MÈRE VAILLANT
The village sick-nurse

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

Late at night, however, when everybody had retired, even Madame de Kergoat—who, moved suddenly to unexplainable amiability, had prolonged the evening with music and a regular *feu-roulant* of witty and fascinating chatter—the boy crept, as in the old days, to his sister's rooms, and knocked softly at the door.

Whenever Gäidik had visited Kergoat since her marriage, she had insisted upon occupying her old suite instead of accepting her mother's offer of a gorgeous "state apartment" a floor below. This suite had always been essentially hers, selected and arranged by herself, and none would have pleased her as well, for attached to it was a sort of observatory, a round turret-chamber whose six windows looked straight down upon the sea, which to-night seethed and boiled in dense blackness like a gigantic witch's caldron. Above it, clear to the height of her tower, a white powder of scattered foam and spindrift, as dense and thick as a snow *tourmente* in the Alps, whirled and danced amid strange, deep noises, forming a woolly, impenetrable shroud which muffled the distant red gleam of the light-house, and clung in broad, shining patches against the heavy glass of the oriel casements.

This was Gäidik's favorite retreat. Tapestryed throughout with sombre old Gobelins, it looked as if it held the secrets of a thousand centuries, and from its embossed and emblazoned ceiling hung antique bronze lamps, shedding a clear, subdued light upon the stiff, richly carved old furniture, cushioned with equally ancient gold and silver brocades. The whole place was filled just then with rosy shadows, heavy with the perfume of gardenias and violets—of which there were four or five bowlfuls on the tables and in the embrasures—and aromatized by the fragrance of the pine-cones and cedar

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

logs burning on the wide hearth of the adjoining bedroom.

Silently Gäidik drew Lõic down upon a deep arm-chair wide enough and to spare for both of them together.

"I've come here to be scolded and comforted," the boy said, simply, glancing up at her with eyes filled with pensiveness and laughter—"here in your hobgoblin room, my good Fairy. I have come because I feel awfully silly."

"Hobgoblin room! No, Lõic Ab-Vor, my watchtower! See, isn't this place the eighth wonder of the world, suspended above the abyss like a gull's nest, surrounded with foam as if the waves really passed over it, and yet so calm and cosey?"

"I think the eighth wonder of the world—the greatest of all—is here beside me," Lõic interrupted, nestling caressingly against her, "for just being with you has already put all bothersome ideas out of my head, Gäid."

She looked at him, and her heart quickened with apprehension, for now she knew that the strange words of Mère Corentine, and perchance some other dark things as yet unknown to her, were ranking in the boy's mind.

She bent forward, and ever, ever so softly touched his bright hair with her lips. "And now, sweetheart," she whispered, coaxingly, "tell me what is troubling you, because there are very few sorrows great or big that cannot be spirited away by being shared with somebody one loves."

Lõic was tracing patterns with the tips of his patent-leather pumps on the carpet, while his sister patiently waited for him to speak.

"Well, this being so," he said, with sudden decision, "I might as well tell you that the plot has been thickening here, Gäid. Many's the time I have laughed on the wrong side of my mouth. Yesterday morning there

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

was a scene—only one of a lot—and I got mad. Oh, you don't know how mad I got! Also, that moment at Mère Corentine's this morning upset me, although I'm an ass to confess it, but it seemed then that something horrible, like a bad spell, was being cast upon me. I don't just know how to explain it, but that's how it felt."

"Good Heavens!" thought Gäidik, frightened in good earnest. She did not stir, though a little cold shiver crept over her from head to foot, and it was quite calmly that she replied:

"How in the world can you, my own brave, plucky little Frérot, let yourself be influenced by a poor old woman's dying vagaries? Surely you cannot attach any importance to what she said or did! You, a true-born Kergöat, who does not know what fear is!" She realized that presently she would have to take in hand and deal separately with all her darling's difficulties, but she must gain time and draw them from him one by one—no very easy task in itself—so just at the outset the complete group must be banished from her mind.

Outside the night had become, if possible, darker and wilder yet. The windows were quite blinded with that curious imitation of snow blown brutally against them by a furious force which seemed to demand instant admittance; and suddenly Gäidik felt as though the very tempest she loved was a malignant being fighting against her like a senseless lunatic, because, for the first time, she saw the future drearily lighted by a past that itself seemed a grim menace. Just then there was a lull in the crazy symphony of the wind and sea, and in the momentary, uncanny stillness she heard Lõic saying:

"Afraid; no, not afraid, but puzzled, Gäid, and—well—miserable!" His voice had become slightly unsteady and his eyes were cast down.

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

With a sense of helplessness bewildering in its intensity, she let herself slip at his feet, and, flinging her arms around him, said, piteously:

"Oh, my poor little darling! What have they done to you to change you so? Come, Lōic," she continued, raising herself a little and speaking with a new authority, "pull yourself together and tell me all—you understand—all that has happened here lately, because I must know, and that at once!"

Lōic looked down at the little kneeling figure outlined in graceful folds of green crape, with its two thick, long braids of rippling hair tumbling to the very floor, and wondered; for suddenly all Gāidik's reserve had been swept away as if by a wet sponge from a slate, and her very soul was sparkling out of her eyes.

"For days and nights, for weeks and months, during all the time of our separation, I have thought only of you!" she went on. "Don't you see that you are all I have ever loved since papa's death, all I love now? But what is the use of telling you, you know it, and now—oh, my poor little Lōic—I find that all my dreads and anxieties were still far short of the reality!" She broke off suddenly, ashamed of having let herself be so carried away, for even with him she had always kept herself severely in hand, since of all moral qualities she was disposed to put self-control the first.

Lōic turned his face away; his lips were twitching ominously, and he did not want her to notice it. "I'm sorry if I have alarmed you, Gāid," he said at last, drearily, his young face curiously aged and drawn, "but it's been a bit lonely without you, and then, too, I felt myself getting bad, not merely full of the devil, as I used to be when you were here, but real downright ugly and ready for anything." The grip of his hand tightened

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

unconsciously on Gäidik's, until the gems of her rings hurt her, yet she hardly heeded it, for all her powers of feeling were concentrated upon him.

"Don't say such things, Lõic," she said, more firmly. "You have no right even to think them. You are my own brave boy, and you are merely yielding to a bit of nervousness which I do not like to see in you, but which I can understand, so let us talk the matter over calmly, if possible, and see what is best to be done. Now, to begin with, please be more explicit. What is the cause of all these scenes, of all this discouragement, so little in accordance with your whole nature?"

Lõic had faced round in the big chair, and sat for a moment in silence. His lips were quite steady now, but his left eyebrow kept twitching in a singular manner.

"I am not brave, Gäidik!" he cried, in sudden exasperation—"not brave worth a cent—for I dread I don't know what when *she* hits me; not the pain, of course—that's ridiculous—but what I may be tempted to do. And yet I am awfully fond of her, for she can be ever so winning, and she's very good to me most of the time—does almost anything I ask when I take the trouble to coax her a bit. I feel a brute, a bully, and a coward—yes, a coward," he repeated, stamping his foot, "or sometimes worse—a real, downright bad 'un! The truth is, I don't know half the time where I'm at."

He writhed in a sort of dumb, twisted agony, and Gäidik was one throb of pity for him.

"But, Lõic," she pleaded, "surely you must be exaggerating; I know Mamma is difficult, capricious, disconcerting, but what is it that has broken you up like that? There certainly is something you don't say."

Lõic gave a sudden short crack of laughter, which filled his sister with absolute terror.

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

"Yes, there is!" he cried, with a wild, scared look. "One of these days when she is really angry she will lodge me in Mettray—she's sworn it—so there!"

Gäidik gave one little gasp, licked her lips with the tip of her tongue, and then sprang to her feet.

"Mettray—the reformatory for young criminals!" she exclaimed, her voice trembling with a fury such as she had never experienced. "She has threatened you with Mettray? Is she stark, staring mad? As God is above us, if she ever dares to do that again she'll have me to deal with, and that won't be a pleasing job for her to tackle!"

She drew in a deep, unsteady breath through set teeth, there was an unpleasantly strained ring in her low-pitched voice, while in her dark-gray eyes sprang a positively cruel glitter.

"Now," she said, harshly, grasping the edge of a table with one slim hand, "you will kindly tell me when and how your Mother"—she no longer said "Mamma"—"has used this abominable threat to you?"

Löic, too, rose and came towards her. Although breathing, also, somewhat hurriedly, he had apparently recovered something of his customary calmness.

"Frequently," he answered, steadily enough—"that is, whenever she was very angry; but of late she has spoken of it when she was not angry, which makes me think that she is really in earnest about it. Otherwise I would never have mentioned it to you. You know, Gäid, that I don't like to complain!"

Gäidik agreed in an unintelligible monosyllable. She was still standing by the table thinking, and the subject of her meditations was so grave that she did not even try to fill up the awkward silence which followed, a silence all the deeper for those forces of the unchained dark

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

that smote and heaved like solid things against the granite walls. In her heart she was wondering whether, in speaking to the son, she should be weakly scrupulous and attempt to gloss over the ignominy of the mother's conduct, as well as the very real danger of the situation, or be boldly and unconventionally frank, and treat him as one to whom one could tell the truth under any and every circumstance.

Well did she know of the dreadful reformatory of Mettray, where France lodges the recalcitrant children of the rich. She knew how parents, tired of the mischievous freaks of their spoiled offspring, often confine them there, not always because they have committed any crimes, or even grave sins, but simply because, when beginning to "feel their oats," they have shown themselves rebellious to a parental authority exercised too late.

A year or so after her marriage, happening to be visiting some friends whose chateau was but a few miles distant from the great *Colonie - Pénitentiaire*, she had driven there with her hosts, and had been shown over the huge establishment, grimly intrenched behind unscalable stone walls. How well she remembered the beauty of that summer day, with the golden sunlight falling across the green grass of the model farm through the interlaced boughs of long avenues of wych-elms and lindens, the brilliancy of the great flower-beds in the Governor's garden contrasting so pathetically with the wretched lot of those long files of boys toiling under the harsh eyes of their *gardes - chiourmes!* Labor in the sweat of the brow was, she knew well, the least painful portion of what those delicately reared lads had to endure. The coarse uniform, the coarse prison food from which their pet terriers would probably have turned away in the days when they themselves were still the

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

pampered darlings of wealthy families, the long nights of misery in the *chambrée*, with its whitewashed walls, its barred casements, where one little iron bedstead, thin-mattressed and hard-pillowed, almost touched its fellow to right and left—all this the inmates of Mettray could endure, but the frightful humiliation, the eternal degradation of such a sojourn, the fell companionship which lashed the utterly guiltless ones side by side with the really vicious and depraved, what of that? Also there were to be seen young offenders committed to the tender mercies of Mettray for a few months, as a *wholesome* warning, by their parents or guardians, and who were immediately subjected to solitary confinement, locked up in their cells at night like murderers and thieves, made to eat their meals alone, and conducted by armed guards to the class and lecture rooms with which this jail is munificently provided, wearing black masks over their poor little terrified faces, in order to prevent their features from being recognized later on by their mates. She had seen with her own eyes a young Aristocrat brought before the Governor, handcuffed between two gendarmes, because he had, after three months of this torture, managed to make good his escape. Hunted throughout the length and breadth of France, the boy had been run to earth by the police and brought back to feast on a diet of bread and water in a dark cell, as first punishment for his attempt to get away. With squared shoulders the wretched lad had stood before the all-powerful official, slender, handsome, saying nothing in his own defence, striving to give no sign of the bitter anguish he felt, his big, blue eyes dry and defiant, his white lips firmly compressed to stifle the sobs that were swelling in his throat at the prospect which lay before him of many further months of insult, torment, and shame. He

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

knew that once his "punishment" was over he would be sent to the farm, where he would work cheek by jowl with all sorts of little miscreants, and in spite of his efforts his heart was evidently bursting within him with an agony of desperation and revolt. Clearly he cared little what happened next, probably heard not at all the pompous admonition of the verbose Governor of this vast, stone-jawed trap which again held him in its power.

The scene flashed through Gáidik's mind as she stood gazing vacantly at Lóic; even the words of the Governor, when she had pleaded for mercy and tried to intercede in the young Noble's behalf, still rang in her ears.

"Mercy would be quite out of place, Madame la Duchesse," the great man had pronounced, stroking his iron-gray mustache; "we could never master our prisoners if in such an instance an example was not made."

Merciful God! was she ever to see her beloved little Lóic in such a plight? And at the thought beads of cold perspiration gathered on her forehead, paralyzing dread held her mute. Could such things be? What! Only because he was headstrong and had been over-indulged!

She ground her heel into the carpet and braced herself for battle. The thoughts that were passing within her were little suspected by Lóic—thoughts of the immediate steps she would take to save him from such a doom, of the interview she would have with her Mother, of the terrible scene that would, without a doubt, take place between them.

"What are you going to do, Gáid?" Lóic said, looking at her in a searching, anxious way.

"I cannot say just now," she answered, slowly and deliberately, "because I do not quite know myself, yet—and—because—it is too serious a case to be decided upon in a hurry. But I can promise you, Lóic, that you will

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

not be menaced again, if I can help it in any way—whatever that way may lead to. Of that, rest assured. I cannot believe that your Mother really meant what she said; but even if she did not, she has done a wrong and a dangerous thing, and if necessary I will appeal to Uncle René in order to make her change her attitude towards you.”

Lôic straightened himself up with a certain briskness which those who have watched the reprieve of a convict know well; he carefully buttoned his jacket, pulled it down in front, and mechanically tapped his chest where there were wrinkles in the cloth. Evidently there was nothing more to be said on the subject, since Gâidik had promised. Pleasurably surprised by this confident air, his sister, crossing the room, sat down in a deep window-seat, looking proudly at the brave little soldier before her.

“When are you to join the *Borda*?” she asked, suddenly, but with a gravity of tone which she had as yet never displayed towards him. “You see, it would be much better for you, Lôic, to be away from here; I do not like the present state of affairs at all—it is no use for me to try and disguise the fact from you—and that would cut it short.”

For an instant Lôic did not reply; he sat down beside Gâidik, stretched his legs out with a jerk, and gazed intently at the foam-bespattered window-panes, reflecting like a dark mirror the rosy glow of the lamps and the exquisitely mediæval room.

“I’ve still got two years to wait—if I ever join it,” he pronounced at last, doubtfully.

“If?” Gâidik retorted, in astonishment. “Time has come for you to look seriously at the future, Lôic. If you are going to enter the navy—which I do not doubt

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

you are desirous to do—it is time you should begin to work in earnest. If not, you should work just as hard in order to prepare yourself for your college course.”

Löic moved uneasily and drummed his fingers impatiently upon the window-sill; once or twice his quick eyes rested on his sister's face, surprised at her determined tone. It seemed to him as if he had just made a puzzling discovery, as if the disparity in their years had suddenly manifested itself. Although it conveyed no sense of discomfort or estrangement, there was, nevertheless, in her expression a quiet suggestion of experience and authority entirely new and startling to him.

At length he spoke with a faint undertone of humor in his voice.

“That question was just what made Mamma so angry yesterday,” he said. “She bullyragged me about that very thing, and, Lord! wasn't she in a wax! Why, she actually shook me till my teeth rattled.”

Gäidik made no reply for some minutes. To say that she was shocked and indignant would be but a poor description of her feelings. Fully did she realize the greatness of the task she had sworn to accomplish, for none better than she knew the wayward, changeful, incomprehensible woman she would have to deal with, a woman whose moods varied like the sun and shade of an April day, and whose sudden fits of remorse and love for her son were as passionate as her vanity and amazing egotism were cold. Also the poor girl could not but recognize that, keen of vision as she herself was, and difficult to satisfy in anything that savored of evasion, she would probably be baffled by some unscrupulous trick or other, and so there came to her a dread beside which all anxieties she had ever felt for Löic seemed pale and colorless.

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

Respecting her silence, Lõic was also mute, gazing absently before him, but suddenly they both started, for above the furious booming of the waves and the shrill whistling of the wind the sound of the great castle clock solemnly announcing midnight brought to them a rush of countless memories, but especially of that far-away night when they had fallen asleep in each other's arms on the balcony near by.

"Do you remember?" Lõic whispered, with an irrepresible twinkle in his eye. "What if we should bring about another catastrophe like that, by this secret meeting?"

Gäidik could not help smiling in spite of her heart-breaking thoughts. "The nuisance," she sagely remarked, "of catastrophes happening late at night is that they're very apt to lap over into the early morn; indeed, the grudge I usually bear the past is that its evils deprive the future of nothing. Meanwhile let's save the present, at least, by calling a truce to darksome repinings and by seeking our respective beds—though the wise men of modern times do insist upon it that the present doesn't exist, being but an infinitesimal interval between two infinities moving across the face of Eternity. And now, if you desire a less abstruse subject for meditation before sleep, remember, Frérot, that drifting is not satisfactory work, and that energy and a good purpose, bravely held to, accomplish great things in spite of the wise men's brilliant aphorisms."

Lõic rose and stood for a few seconds looking into his sister's eyes. "I'll do whatever you wish me to do," he said, in a slightly altered voice, "because you are the dearest and best and most loyal sister a boy ever had," and he threw his arms almost roughly about her neck.

IX

Great Eblis said to his dark Emirs
As doom he gave at Jehannum gate:
"I have mingled the seed of Adam's breed
And roiled the current of mortal fate.

"The rose shall joy in her blossoms blown,
The lily laugh for her buds new-born,
And all things else that have life shall own
The tie of blood to the latest morn.

"The fox and jackal that debt shall pay,
And the wolf, to those of her own gray skin,
But the son of man to the latest day
Shall seek with tears for his kith and kin.

"Brother in brother with vain surmise
Shall strive the thoughts of his heart to see,
And the child shall search in its mother's eyes
And find the soul of an enemy"

Then they cried aloud with one accord
As they bowed themselves to the iron floor
Of the Gate of Doom, "Thus shall stand, Dread Lord,
Thy throne, henceforth and forevermore!"

M. M.

NEXT morning, before even Lóic was astir, the silence of the stable-yard was broken by the sharp, light foot-step of Gäidik's favorite hunter. The storm had died away with all the suddenness of its advent, and it was a mellow, delightful world upon which Gäidik gazed. The air was perfumed with the damp scent of newly fallen leaves, and many more in delicate tints of amber

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

and ruby were gently swaying in the breeze upon the sun-bathed boughs.

Quickly she left behind her the great castle, where not a blind was as yet raised, and made her way towards a vast, sweeping moorland, whereon heather, gorse, and whin held united sway, bordered towards the south by a dusky pine forest, whose paths were beset with deep mosses and thick fern-brakes.

The difficulties of the future weighed heavily upon her, and she hoped that the keen, resinous air, the fragrant dusk, the sense of absolute isolation and seclusion she would find in those woods would brace and tonicize her thoughts, so she as speedily as possible turned her horse's head into a level avenue overhung with a thick interlacement of branches, upon every needle of which a prismatic dew-drop sparkled.

She rode far and fast, but at last she slackened her speed and looked about her with renewed courage and hope. Her calm was restored, her deep-set eyes had lost their strained expression, and she had, as she had anticipated, entirely recovered the attitude of one strong with that enduring strength which is completely independent of human sympathies. It was well for her that she was so, since life was dealing somewhat harshly with her just then, not only with regard to her loveless marriage, but in many other ways besides; but as she walked her hunter along a narrow, grass-cushioned path, her mind was busy only with plans concerning Lōic, and her heart warmed with tenderness and pity for him alone.

Unfortunately, Madame de Kergoat, who, for reasons best known to herself, did not feel entirely satisfied with the present state of affairs, and was anxious about the turn they might now take, had bethought herself of riding to meet her daughter, and was even then advancing

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

towards her. Had Gäidik seen her in time she would unhesitatingly have turned into the thicket on the chance of avoiding her; but perceiving, with a sudden and characteristic narrowing of the eyes and sharp set of the mouth, that she had already been detected, she rode on to the inevitable encounter which she had hoped to secure under different circumstances.

"What on earth made you run away like this at dawn?" the Marquise asked, ranging alongside and bestowing upon her daughter a sardonic little smile boding no good.

"A desire for peace and fresh air," Gäidik replied, quietly, in her direct, almost abrupt fashion.

"And are not fresh air and peace to be had at Kergoat?"

"Not always combined."

Madame de Kergoat seemed in no manner surprised at the brevity of the answer, but her smile became tinged with a slight embarrassment.

"You are not in your usual cheery mood?" she suggested, imprudently, in spite of her sincere desire to avoid any sort of explanation with this uncomfortable daughter of hers.

They were now riding on the margin of a small lake carpeted with delicious aquatic blooms, each in her individual and characteristic way. Gäidik, with a marked ease and assurance of attitude, her mother with even greater grace, but not with the same astonishingly firm seat.

Gäidik glanced over her shoulder before replying. They were still a long way from the castle. Then she said, in the same even voice, "No, and it is because I am not at all satisfied about Lõic."

"Gäidik!" Madame de Kergoat exclaimed, her eyes

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

acquiring instantly their harshest and most metallic look; "this sort of thing won't do!"

"What sort of thing?"

"I mean that I seriously recommend you not to mix yourself up too much with Lõic and with my management of him!"

Gäidik's calm face became fixed and rigid; she turned completely round towards her mother.

"Why not, if you please?" she asked, coldly.

"Because you might do more harm than you think, besides which it is no business of yours!"

"Look here, Mamma!" said Gäidik, with an extraordinary ring of decision in her voice. "If you think that I am going to stand by, with my hands in my pockets, and watch Lõic's life made as wretched as my own, you are entirely mistaken!"

"In what way has your life been made wretched? You will find it difficult to bring any one to believe that to become at fifteen an immensely wealthy Duchess by winning the affections of a singularly handsome and distinguished man is a very great misfortune."

Gäidik felt that she was getting no further on. It would be folly to lose her temper at this juncture, worse than folly, indeed, with such an adversary, so she brought her hunter by an almost imperceptible turn of the wrist closer to her mother's horse, until they nearly touched, and remarked, indifferently:

"I suppose it would be no use telling you my reasons for considering both those pieces of luck in the light of a misfortune, since you would not be likely to understand me. Moreover, it has nothing to do with the very serious and urgent matter in hand."

A stile was barring their way, and, without troubling to unfasten its latch with crop or hand, they leaped it, still

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

side by side as if scarcely conscious of the act; but when they had again slightly reined in their horses, Geneviève de Kergoat squared herself determinedly in her saddle, as if in obedience to the sound of trumpets summoning her to do battle.

"I do not desire to discuss the matter in hand!" she said, shortly and haughtily.

Before replying, Gäidik looked speculatively at her.

"But I do," she said, with inexorable persistence.

"And why? Has Lōic been complaining?"

Gäidik took a tiny case from her saddle-pocket, selected a cigarette, and, slipping the reins for a moment over her left wrist, lit it with the quick deftness of long habit by means of a Russian wick-match-case; while her companion watched her every movement with growing irritation.

"He has not complained, as you might very well guess, if you knew him better, but he has mentioned something to me which decided me to have this unpleasant conversation with you."

"May I venture to ask what that was?" sneered Geneviève.

Gäidik glanced at her through a thin cloud of smoke.

"Certainly, since that is precisely what I wish most to tell you. He confessed to me that you are getting into the habit of threatening him with Mettray, a mere trifle, as you see, but one which, unfortunately, is preying on his mind, and getting on his nerves to a very alarming extent."

Geneviève laughed unpleasantly. "I'm glad to hear it has had so much effect, for I thought he showed remarkably little fear when I warned him of my intentions, and that he was becoming sadly callous."

Honest indignation leaped to Gäidik's eyes. Her

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

cigarette was almost finished. She drew one more long inhalation and threw the burning end into a little brook, hustling and gurgling beneath a tangle of wild convolulus, where it fizzled faintly, then she emitted the smoke in a thin, slow, spiral column, for she did not as yet trust herself to speak.

"I cannot believe that you really mean what you say," she at last managed to enunciate, with unaltered calmness, "nor that your menace was more than a very poor joke, but Loïc is far deeper than you think, and the joke, if joke there be, is doing him much harm, so it would be best to discontinue it, especially since, adoring him as you do, you cannot possibly enjoy it yourself."

"You are at perfect liberty to believe anything you like. For the sake of convenience, we will say that I was joking, but if I catch you endeavoring to take the wind out of my sails, I will make things uncommonly hot for you, Marc'häid, that's all I have to tell you!"

Absolutely stupefied, Gäidik gazed at her mother. For a moment they faced each other, these two great ladies, both equally determined and handsome, one dark, black-eyed, sinuous in her feminine grace, the other fair, with glinting, coppery hair and thoughtful, deep-set gray eyes, both sitting straight and slender with a peculiarly proud and unbending carriage of the head. Diamond was, indeed, cutting diamond.

"Have you anything more to add?" Geneviève asked, insolently.

Gäidik continued to look for a minute or so at her mother, as one looks at some curious phenomenon.

"Yes!" she said at length, firmly, but quite respectfully. "I have to tell you, Mamma, that if you do not promise me to give up using that sort of threat, I will be forced to inform Uncle René of what is going on here."

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

"And by what right will you do that?" Geneviève inquired, in a voice made low and unsteady by anger.

"By the right of affection, justice, and fair play!" Gaidik retorted, with a certain cruel relish, which was founded entirely upon the present situation, for to be vindictive was totally unlike her.

"Do you realize that you are speaking to your Mother, and that, moreover, you are proposing to assume a terrible responsibility?" the other continued, in the same tone.

"Yes," was the unexpected answer, "although it is difficult just now to realize the first part of your question. As to the latter I would consider myself utterly despicable were I to shun the responsibility you allude to."

"By Heavens, my girl!" Geneviève cried, with an incredulous wonder in her flashing eyes. "You are certainly possessed of considerable pluck to oppose me in this way. I have broken you before, and I can do so again!"

The implacable Gaidik nodded her head in calm acquiescence. She was too straightforward to deny the truth of her mother's words, knowing full well that the battle would be an unequal one. As coolly as ever she replied:

"I'm afraid you are right! I have not undertaken an easy task, nor do I relish placing myself in direct opposition to—my Mother—for at heart I am slavishly respectful of—of—the maternal dignity, and have endured much to keep within the duties it prescribes, but I will do as I have said, nevertheless." There was an unpleasant glitter in her eyes, and her whole face was transformed by it. "Loïc comes first and foremost with me, and in regard to him there is no time to lose, so I shall certainly not prove weak-kneed."

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

"Just like your impudence to talk that sort of rubbish!" Geneviève exclaimed, furiously. "But go ahead, if you like! Lóic is my son, and I can do with him just as I please. Nobody will ever believe that I do not love him—not even himself—so you can do your worst, and that at once. I don't care—a snap of the fingers!"

"Very well," Gäidik said, quietly, and she was about to close the conversation by moving away, when she chanced to look at her companion. Again their eyes met, and she paused, for Geneviève's face had suddenly grown haggard. It was no longer the face of a reckless, angry woman devoid of all scruple. In a moment the very features had changed, and she who rode there beside her was a hunted creature with scared eyes and trembling lips. Gäidik had a thoroughly strong nature's true softness of heart, and a wave of pity and irresistible regret rushed over her instantly. She bent towards her mother and, impelled by genuine and sincere sympathy, said, pleadingly:

"Please forgive me, Mamma, if I have hurt you, but do tell me that you were not in earnest about Mettray, and that you will not use that threat any more. It cuts me to the heart to see you look like that!"

A gleam of triumph shot between Geneviève's swiftly lowered eyelids. She had been terribly frightened, and now felt like crying out with the sudden relief, but she was far too clever to give herself away, and so, pushing Gäidik's extended little hand roughly from her, she assumed an air of deep offence.

"You might have known," she said, sulkily, "that I was only using Mettray as a whip-lash when Lóic was too impossible—and that he is impossible at times you are well aware. Who do you take me for to imagine that I ever meant it seriously? But you always did jump at

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

conclusions for the most part based upon your own extraordinary fancies!" There were actually tears in her eyes, and she dabbed at them with a dainty little lace handkerchief, which had surely been woven on purpose for such idle tasks.

For one fleeting instant Gäidik watched her with a puzzled expression, like that of some one who hears a sound, and sees a sight for which it is impossible to account. She had grown singularly pale, for a faint, uneasy doubt tugged obstinately at her heart; but her nature was, alas, of those which seem destined never quite to realize the possibility of treachery; not because they are devoid of shrewdness or of a very high order of intelligence, but because they are possessed of a fund of frank confidence that never turns completely to distrust. Such was Gäidik, and thus it happened that unconsciously she played into her mother's hands, repulsed doubt—that wise inward counsellor—and finally allowed herself to be persuaded that it was she who had been unjust and in the wrong. She was destined never to discover what it is to be consumed, harried, driven, by a deep, inextinguishable, unassuageable craving for intrigue and the tortuous byways of craft, and in the innocence of her soul she traversed the rest of the forest roads to the castle, on that mellow autumn morning, her dark mood quite evaporated, thinking and speaking with renewed hope and joy of Løic's future. Had not Geneviève at last consented to promise in the most solemn and binding fashion never even to allude again to the terrors of Mettray? That any one could fail to keep a word thus given never for a second entered Gäidik's range of possible events—she was not yet worldly wise enough for that.

While the ill-assorted mother and daughter were still

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

a few hundred yards from the park walls, Løic himself ran joyfully out to meet them.

"Here, at last!" he cried, with his brilliant smile. "I was just going to ride after you when I heard the beating of hoofs approaching; but it was mean of you, Gäid, to steal a march on me!"

His eyes sought his sister's face, and searching there discovered that he had, however, been right not to follow her. From the brightness of her expression he turned his attention to his mother, beside whose horse he was walking, one hand carelessly playing with the slackened bridle, and detected that she, too, was singularly amiable of aspect, from which favorable signs he argued that all was going well.

"What can Gäidik have said to her?" he asked himself with pardonable curiosity; "but Gäid always succeeds in all she undertakes; she's a witch!" and aloud he remarked:

"I'll tell you what we'll do, let's go for a short cruise after lunch. The sea is almost quiet again, and if you say so, Mamma, I'll tell them to get the *Foam - Crest* ready, and we can start immediately after we've swallowed the last mouthful." The *Foam - Crest* was a handsome, quick-sailing yawl presented to Løic by his mother on his last birthday, and was the pride of his heart. Her clean, long spars, her snowy sails, the dazzling gleam of her elaborate brass fittings, the way she splashed and gurgled through the water at her topmost speed, spelled absolute delight for her young owner. But Madame de Kergoat declined the pleasures of a "short cruise" in that most beautiful of crafts, judging with her customary shrewdness that the softened Gäidik would talk to Løic in a way advantageous to herself, wherefore she left the brother and sister to the enjoyment of each

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

other's company—a circumstance over which, to be frank, they did not greatly mourn.

When they started, the sea was of a transparent, grayish-green exquisite to behold, and Kadoc—who, of course, was Lōic's sailing-master—prophesying fine weather, they scudded away merrily before the breeze. At first Gāidik and Lōic talked in a scrappy, erratic way, walking side by side fore and aft, and stopping at every turn to chat with Kadoc, who had the wheel, and whose bronzed countenance fairly beamed with joy at seeing them together again.

Thanks to a successful fight with some last remnants of her anxieties, Gāidik was in excellent spirits, and so unchanged that Kadoc could hardly believe his eyes, as he watched her active little figure in its trim nautical attire swing to the roll of the yawl with all the ease of by-gone days, her face flushed with delight.

"*Sainte Mère des Anges!*" he muttered, between his strong, white teeth. "Can it be true that there's a man bad-hearted enough to make her unhappy? She's just our Mam'zelle Gāidik, not a bit altered, just the same brave little soldier, the Saints bless her!"

They had by now rounded the "Pointe de Kergōat," and the water, still restless from the storm of the previous day, was running round them in pale-colored hills, but it was a foamless sea that alternately lifted the yawl and let her slide into transparent, glassy pits with the regularity of clock-work. This "mountain-climbing" in no way disturbed Gāidik or Lōic, who, to the manner born, stood up to the long, graceful, undulating sway of the tiny yacht, as they watched the sails of a dozen *Sinagots* dotting the horizon, where the sun turned the water to faint pearl and amethyst. The wheel groaned and kicked softly, the sails slatted a little in the shifts

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

of the light wind, and as they drew nearer to the herring fleet they breathed to the very bottom of their lungs the delicious, all-encircling fragrance of the ocean.

"Feeling better, eh?" Loïc said, with a grin, looking at his sister's bright face.

"I should think so! This sort of thing clears the eye, the soul, and the heart! It's just like camellias!"

"How camellias?"

"The sight of them, I mean. That tall hedge all pink and white, and brilliant polished green—solid, wholesome, clean-looking, and old-fashioned—on the north terrace always produces the same honest, bracing effect upon me."

"Well, you are a queer one, Gäid; but look, here are a lot of your old friends; away off there is Yawen Gwesmark, in his *Good-Luck* boat; these other four alongside of him are from Kergöat, too. They'll be slipping by in a minute; don't you recognize them?"

"Of course I do; who do you take me for?" was the laughing answer. "Let's go nearer to them Kadoc!" she shouted.

The wheel twitched almost imperceptibly in the big sailor's hand, and the *Foam-Crest* gambolled gayly into the midst of the covey of fishing-boats dancing on the gold-tipped waves. Gäidik was dancing, too, with the joy of finding herself again on that waste of wallowing sea, so often vexed with gales, so continuously scored by the tracks of the Kergöat boats, and which she loved in all its moods, even the worst. To-day, however, was clear and soft and warm, and it thrilled her to feel the agile and graceful yawl slide over the long hollows, as the foresail scythed back and forth against her beloved hazy Breton sky, and when the red sails of Yawen's boat glided into nearer proximity she called out, in her old, merry fashion:

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

"*Hé!* Yawen, what luck to-day?" thus causing the four men and the boy of that *équipage* to wave their woolen caps ecstatically and to utter a loud chorus of deep-throated welcomes.

"Why, that's like being home again," laughed Gäidik, waving her hand frantically to Yawen, a thick-set, clean-shaven man clothed in a dark-blue Jersey and high rubber boots, who was standing knee-deep in a silver heap of freshly caught fish.

"Full boat, Mam'zelle Gäidik!" the *patron* called back, with a chuckle—"topping full! You're bringing us fair fishing luck, my little Lady!"

In another boat, close aboard, a stream of glittering herrings was being thrown into great, square baskets, with coarse salt spread between the successive layers, one man pitching the herrings continuously to those charged with "packing" them, the rasping sound of rough salt rubbed on the metallic scales of the fish clearly perceptible above the whispering of the long swells melting beneath the keels, and forming a steady *leit-motif* to the gentle flaps of the sails, the creaking of the ropes, and the soft hum of the breeze in the rigging. It was a charming *coup d'œil*, this little fleet hard at work, and the enthusiastic reception accorded to the young Marquis in his azure-and-white sweater, and the lovely little Duchess standing by the wheel, a *béret* stuck firmly on her bright hair, in the most business-like way, was not the least charming feature of it.

These two Aristocrats were with them, and of them at heart, the fishermen knew, they looked at them toiling there with eyes steady, clear, and knowing, and spoke in affectionate, sympathetic voices. Truly, they were Seigneurs of whom they might well be proud, and whom, besides, they really and genuinely loved, so when the

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

Foam-Crest, after having paid her *bienvenue*, crawled regretfully away to begin her homeward journey, the hurricane of adieus which followed them were as reluctant as if they had been laboriously windlassed out of each separate man.

The yawl picked up a light, friendly northeaster off Cape Kergoat that drove her swiftly within view of Kergoat itself, and Kadoc cheerily cried, "All's well," as he relinquished the wheel to Gäidik's eager little hands.

With a sigh of content, Lõic sat down on a smartly coiled rope at her feet.

"By-the-way, Gäid," he said, suddenly, "what did you tell Mamma this morning? I was amazed when I saw her smiling and gracious, for I knew by your face that you'd been talking to her, and I've been eaten up with curiosity ever since, but I did not want to spoil our trip by bringing my troubles on the tapis at once."

Gäidik changed color, and her eyes lost their joyful expression. The remembrance of that morning's ride was like an extinguisher to her present delight.

"Oh," she said, rather vaguely, "I don't know that it's any use going over all that again. Anyhow, she swore to me that she only meant to frighten you into good behavior, and she solemnly promised—gave me her sacred word of honor, you know—never to do so again. I think, Lõic, darling, that you should not fret her about the *Borda*, though. Don't mind my saying so, but it is not quite manly to tease her with doubts as to your ultimately joining it." She turned a couple of spokes of the wheel, glanced a second over her shoulder, and then nodded at him in her tender, confiding little way.

"I told you last night, Gäid," he said, earnestly, as if

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

a great load had been suddenly lifted from his mind, "that I would do all you wish me to do, and I hope that you know me well enough not to doubt my keeping my word. If you say *Borda*, a *Bordache* I will be—and—oh, I wish I could tell you how grateful I am for what you've done! I know how much it must have cost you to speak to Mamma, but then you never count your trouble where others are concerned. Anyhow, my ownest own Gäid, I'll do my very, very best to thank you with something better than empty words, you can count on that."

Her eyes were soft and deep and dark as she bent down to kiss him quickly before turning her attention again to her steering, and they still retained the same expression of profound tenderness as she guided the *Foam-Crest* towards the Kergöat landing-wharf with the practised hand of an accomplished pilot. Gäidik for once felt perfectly happy and hopeful!

That night there was to be a gala dinner in her honor, to which all the Nobles of the neighborhood had been bidden, and several members of the family would also be present, so they hurried in, arm in arm, to "make themselves beautiful—*se faire beaux!*" as Løic laughingly remarked.

The castle seemed to tower up into the very clouds as they re-entered it, the evening sun shining redly on all its battlements and Gothic spires. It looked more than ever worthy of its great traditions, for the state apartments were open, the servants wore their state liveries, and the whole splendid building was filled with animated and brilliant life.

A curious inward glow, a sense of elation and of boundless relief, accompanied Løic all the way to his own rooms, and mingled with the cares occupying his immediate attention. He knew that he owed it all to his

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

sister, and, having dressed, hastened to go and wait for her in the long, tapestried corridor upon which her suite opened. Nor had he long to wait, for Gäidik was quick in everything she did, and she soon appeared, the most exquisite of small figures, in a daintily simple little silk-muslin frock of palest, palest shell pink—an indescribable complexity of softness and airy folds—hemmed with a thick ruche of freshly gathered Malmaison carnations, which also encircled her perfect shoulders. The way her hair was arranged, low about the brow and sweeping backward in a sort of natural tidal-wave, breaking loose in a foam of delicious, curling tendrils around her heavy coronal of braids, was unique, and her big, gray eyes were full of light as she caught sight of Lōic. With swift pleasure and surprise, she held out her two tiny hands shining with their panoply of superb rings. "That's so nice of you, Lōic, to have waited for me!" she exclaimed, tucking ruthlessly under her rounded arm a fan of pink mother-of-pearl and pink ostrich feathers, upon the end sticks of which her cipher and crown sparkled in pink pearls and brilliants.

"What an out-and-out pretty toilette!" the boy cried, turning round and round her to examine it the better. "You're tremendous, Gäid, and I'll laugh to glimpse the faces of the dowagers when they see you."

Gäidik glanced down at her fragrant skirts and laughed. Her face looked extraordinarily delicate and childish in the moonlight, which was beginning to rain its amethystine fires through the immense windows of the upper hall, near which they were standing—so young, indeed, that the little strawberry-leaved crown entwined in her tawny hair struck one with a sense of positive incongruity.

"It is a costume suited to the season and the roseate

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

occasion," she laughed, "but, of course, that's no reason for begrudging it a word of praise."

"No, you're right; the whole affair, costume included, deserves the best we can say of it," Lōic admitted, "for you've made everything rosy for me. Your very laugh, Madame Gâid, is like nacre and pink velvet." They stood for a minute or two in silence, hand-in-hand, inhaling the mellow air, woven of garden fragrance, which almost palpably hung around them like some astonishingly subtle fabric, and then walked reluctantly down-stairs, chatting gayly. All Lōic's past nervousness and excitement had entirely left him, his old assurance had completely returned, together with a curious feeling that the world left nothing just then to be desired. To regain his sister's companionship was what he had been unconsciously needing all along, and his sense of her presence as she walked down-stairs beside him, her ethereal-looking skirts touching him, the piquant perfume of her carnations shaken at each step towards his nostrils, filled him with a joy that for the moment seemed ultimate.

On the last landing they overtook their mother, who, clad in black laces, with a collar of rubies and diamonds at her throat and a ruby-and-diamond "fender" of extreme magnificence above her classic brow, swept on before them with something of the tragic muse in her dark beauty.

The banqueting-hall was absolutely dazzling as half an hour later the brilliant file of guests entered it, for in matters of etiquette the Marquise ruled her household like a small Court, and from the upper servants in black with knee-breeches, and the countless powdered footmen in azure-and-silver liveries, to the gold plate and wonderful flowers with which the table was covered, everything was the acme of perfection.

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

Löic made a little grimace as he took his place opposite his mother—she had insisted that he should occupy the seat of the master of the house—for he knew only too well that the repast would be long and extremely tedious. These formal and prolonged ceremonials are a time-honored Breton custom, and at Kergoat all such hereditary usages were always carefully observed.

On his right sat a, to him, very formidable personage—his father's elder sister, the Countess de Brielle. Still exceedingly handsome, stately, tall, and looking remarkably like Empress Maria-Theresa, Madame de Brielle had retained three of youth's attributes—a deliciously fresh skin, a frank laugh, and a keen capacity for the enjoyment of life. Her splendid hair, white as snow, sparkled like threads of spun glass beneath her diamond tiara, and so did her beautiful old blue eyes, whose keen glances revealed an unlimited fund of curiosity, shrewdness, worldly wisdom, and very merciless wit. She was one of the most brilliant and most amusing women in Europe.

"And so you are our Amphytryon!" she murmured, turning abruptly to her nephew, "that is a new whim of Geneviève's, eh? How do you like it?"

"Not at all," Löic frankly affirmed; "only," he added, with a rueful modulation of his merry voice, "it would not have done a bit of good for me to tell Mamma so."

Madame de Brielle laughed. "Well, you certainly are off the beaten path, but I'm celebrated for my mastery of unprecedented situations. Will you allow me to help you out, if, in spite of your far-famed *aplomb*, you find yourself at all embarrassed?"

"I will be very much obliged," he replied, quite gravely. "It's very nice of you to propose it, Aunt Elizabeth."

The Dowager was surprised, and her eyes swiftly changed, their mocking becoming veiled by a kind of

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

humorous content. She was beginning to approve of her nephew.

"We know more or less about each other only by hearsay," she smilingly remarked, "but this moment makes for sociability and confidence, *mon bonhomme!*"

Lôic chuckled, for he, too, was pleasantly surprised, but in a minute he pulled a long face and made big, rounded, ominous eyes.

"Pray, tell me then, Aunt Elizabeth, whether it is necessary for me to speak to the overtrimmed lady on my other hand?" he whispered. "She can't expect me to entertain her with brilliant conversation, can she?"

Madame de Brielle simmered with enjoyment.

"Bless you," she cried, leaning back and tittering gently, "that's the Baroness Delahaye, a highly original person by all accounts. Clever woman, too; never knows when she has received a rebuff. She's unavoidable at meetings of the clans like this one, but she is somewhat heavy; also, she has two daughters to marry off, and lives in perpetual dread of seeing them remain on her hands. Perhaps she may make you commit yourself if you are too amiable, Lôic, and it will be charged up to you some ten years from now, which may be unpleasant, since her youngest olive-branch is a generous decade older than yourself."

"I'd better keep a strict guard upon myself, then?" Lôic remarked, with perfect gravity, but his eyes dancing with fun.

"Do you know," his aunt said, "I made until to-night one of the most ridiculous blunders of my life, which annoys me, for it must be a symptom of failing powers. I told myself a hundred times or more that you were a great nuisance, Lôic, and now I find that you're nothing of the sort—moreover, you're positively exhilarating."

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

"I'm in luck, then, Aunt Elizabeth," he rejoined, with a courtly little bow, "because it appears that you're very hard to please, and—" His gesture spoke volumes of deep information on the subject and completed his sentence satisfactorily.

"You seem to be possessed of my entire *dossier*, my dear. Your knowledge of me is evidently as accurate as it is extensive; but isn't it getting rather gloomy here? This little banquet is elaborately chiselled and highly polished, but it lacks animation. Wait a bit; I'm afraid I'll have to throw myself into the breach for the honor of the House of Kergöat, so eat your pheasant in peace, and presently we'll resume our pleasant little chat."

Löic did as he was bid, but, not being as yet much of a gourmet, he soon neglected the succulent morsels on his plate for the pleasure of watching Gäidik, several seats away, *aux prises* with a very witty brother of her mother's, who had arrived at Kergöat an hour before, and had been placed beside her, simply because they eternally disagreed, and, both being past-masters at repartee, always provided unlimited amusement for all listeners. Not at all like his sister in looks, Prince Paul was yet endowed with the same arbitrary, tyrannical, and altogether selfish nature, but, lacking her occasional flashes of tenderness, he was far more dangerous than she. Still, as he possessed an enormous fortune, was a confirmed bachelor and a dashing cavalry leader in his own land, he was a star of the first magnitude, before whom everybody save Gäidik and Löic prostrated themselves. With them he was not popular, and Löic especially could not endure him—a sentiment which was fully reciprocated.

Gäidik's eyes were sparkling, her lips were twitching

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

with mischievous amusement—her whole person had an expression—and all the other women in the room seemed tame and uninteresting beside her. So again she became the absorbing subject of his thoughts, and he was genuinely startled when his aunt, having set the whole table laughing by some of her most witty sarcasms, claimed his attention once more.

“Watching Gaidik, eh?” she began, gayly. “She’s a *bijou*, Gaidik—another surprise to me, for I had fancied, somehow, that she’d be altered—spoiled by all her successes. I’d propped up a portrait of what she would become before my mental eyes, but I’m an old fool, because she’s perfect in every detail of her soul and person, is little Gaidik—down to the very intonation of her voice, the rings on her fingers, the *frou-frou* of her skirts, the very perfume she prefers. That’s like you, Lœic. The curtain is rising upon Act Three, and I fancy I can perceive faint glimmerings of success in your future. Are you really going into the navy?”

“Oh, Aunt Elizabeth, don’t ask me that. Everybody seems convinced that I’m destined to become an admiral, I think!” and he laughed heartily.

“Well, since every one is so sanguine, I may as well tell you that I entertain no such hopes. If you have a spark of true zeal, all right; but if not, I’d pause and reflect. For in case you yourself don’t like the idea, my voice would emphatically be against your joining the *Borda*.”

Lœic looked intensely surprised for a moment; then, “I’m trying to realize that you really and truly think just as I do, Aunt Elizabeth,” he declared. “But what would you have me do if I didn’t go into the navy, since my ‘career,’ as Mamma calls it, appears to be a matter of international importance?”

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

"Marry as early as possible a true daughter of Brittany, to be sure—the finest country in the three continents," she replied—"a proper woman filled with 'the star-fire of the Celtic nature,' and have many children."

"But that's not a profession, and every one says that I must have a profession, *une carrière!*" he said, with a little frown—"Mamma, Uncle Paul, Uncle René, even my own Gäid are set upon it. As for me, I'd rather do as you say, Aunt Elizabeth, if only I could find a wife made on the same pattern as Gäidik."

"Tut, tut, my lad!" the old Countess exclaimed, arching her delicately pencilled eyebrows, "*vous n'êtes pas dégoûté mon ami!* A woman like Gäidik is not picked up every day, let me assure you. But tell me, how is it that René is not here to-night. Has he quarrelled with Geneviève?"

"I think so, Aunt Elizabeth—at least Mamma and he don't seem to pull well together. They disagreed about me—so Mamma said the day before yesterday—and I'm sorry for it, because Uncle René is my pet uncle." And bending towards Madame de Brielle, he added, in a whisper, "I don't like Uncle Paul at all, and I know he hates me."

Madame de Brielle pricked up her ears. "Hates you!" she exclaimed, in astonishment, but without raising her delightfully modulated voice. "Does he, indeed? It got into my head, somehow, that he was Geneviève's chief counsellor, and to see the way she spoils you one wouldn't believe that she's advised by an enemy of yours—although—let me think a moment." And with a play of her eyebrows that attributed her momentary absorption to an effort of memory, "After all, you may be right, which would be an everlasting pity, for Paul is by no means an adversary to be despised."

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

"He's pretty nasty," the disrespectful youth calmly assented; "and, just think, Aunt Elizabeth, it is he, the *Aristo par excellence*, who eggs Mamma on to make me enter the service of the republic."

"You precocious boy!" exclaimed the Countess. "But then," she continued, forgetting to conceal her perturbation, "you are in a pretty bad dilemma, my poor baby. Why on earth, though, does Gäidik join forces with him against you?"

"Oh, Aunt Elizabeth, Gäid is never against me, but—she thinks it would be best for me to be away from here."

The Countess sank back in her chair, giving her dainty head a rueful shake. "I had not thought of that," she muttered. "It's true, your case is peculiar, Lõic—ordinary rules won't apply to it. Well, I'll have to think it over; and don't forget that I'm your friend from to-night on, come what may."

As she said this she looked with a strange intentness—with a glance of almost uneasy question and appraisal—at this handsome, well-grown, promising lad, so young and happy and radiant. Her keen eyes wandered from his brilliant, merry ones to the strong, little brown hand toying with a fruit-knife, and to the already muscular lines of his lithe figure, with its supple grace and strength; while behind him, surrounding him, accessory to him, she was conscious of the superb luxury and stateliness of his ancestral home. The picture was very pleasing, very hopeful—but something struck cold upon her heart notwithstanding. What it precisely was she could not have told, and yet for the fraction of a second the great lady looked blank, even startled. "This must be the effect of my irrepressible old imagination," she thought, smiling derisively at herself. Yet she longed to

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

question him further, longed to find out how the land really lay, hesitated, and while she was hesitating the interminable dinner came to a conclusion. So her dignity was saved and her opportunity lost.

X

Hull down! hull down! from the watching shore,
Darkly her tops mid a sad acclaim
Sink like the phoenix famed of yore
Aglow in orient flame.
O Argo! furrowing fold on fold
Through shaggy fleeces of ocean gold,
God send his dove on the pallid seas
Where spume the sheer Symplegades!
Oh sing an harborage bleak and hoar,
And an empty splendor spread before!
And sigh with the bracken green and brown
On the craggy verge,
Hull down!

The Voyage, II.—M. M.

AGAIN two years passed. During this period Lōic realized more and more what a terrible void the separation from his sister had left in his life. He felt, indeed, quite lost without her, and found no comfort in his mother's ever-increasing caprices, for their relations were more discordant than ever, and the prospect of a settled policy of mutual consideration became less and less possible as time went on.

Fire and ice! That would characterize in brief all phases of their intercourse—an antagonism diversified by spasmodic whirls of tempest and enervating lapses into hysterical tenderness and over-indulgence. Still, Lōic managed to get along somehow, thanks to his buoyant nature, and the early autumn found him *de guerre lasse* aboard the *Borda* at Brest. His mother, against his ex-

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

press desire, had insisted on accompanying him to the vessel, arguing that she wished to see with her own eyes how he would fare in the future, and finally the lad had been forced to yield, without much grace, it is true, to being made what he called "such a little boy" of.

He had now reached the age when it was unpleasant to him to be reminded of how very young he still was, the age when he would have liked to appear alone, to assume freely his new and independent rôle of "officer and gentleman," and it sorely galled him to be suddenly reduced to the position of a child being "lugged" to school. Nor did the dreariness, the dirt, the misty blackness of the great French *Port de Guerre* help to put him in a good temper. He realized, with sudden misgivings, that he was henceforth to work in good earnest, to relinquish all past luxuries and pleasures, to be under close and unrelenting supervision, and he became deeply aware of a very oppressive sensation of regret at these unlovely prospects as he journeyed up-country amid all the pomp and state habitual to Madame de Kergoat when travelling.

It was a wet, cold, blustering day when they finally boarded the training-ship. The sailors and the "middies" wore shining oil-skins, and grimy moisture dripped upon everything in sight, like dirty tears upon a sooty countenance; yet when he stood, at last, before the Commander, it was not fog-drops that dampened his face, but fine beads of perspiration, brought there by an overmastering apprehension—of what he scarcely knew.

For the first time in his life Lōic felt horribly shy and uncomfortable, so much so, indeed, that he was physically affected, and turned absurdly pale.

The Commandant was a tall, thin man, with a narrow forehead, thick, wiry hair, once blond, but now turning

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

gray, and lack-lustre, china-blue eyes, which could, nevertheless, look both very stern and very harsh on occasion. Moreover, the utter silliness of his mother's vehement expressions of recommendation, delivered in a voice of freezing hauteur, struck Lõic painfully, and he was by no means surprised at the Commandant's curt responses and abrupt, uncompromising tones.

"Your son, Madame la Marquise, will take his chance with the others; we do not believe in favoritism here," the old sailor said, with aggressive roughness, but there he suddenly checked himself, for Lõic's expression had gradually become so marked that he could not but observe it, and for a second gazed curiously at the sensitive boy's white face and wide-open, dilated eyes.

"Don't you want to come to us, my boy?" he asked, in an altered and much kinder voice, laying his hand on the well-squared shoulder with suddenly awakened interest and a sort of grim sympathy.

"It isn't that, *Mon Commandant*," Lõic replied, promptly, looking frankly and directly at him. "But I wouldn't like you to believe that I"—he emphasized the pronoun—"expect or desire any favors."

"That's a highly strung, odd youngster," the martinet thought, and aloud he said: "I am glad to hear you say so, and I feel sure that you will endeavor to satisfy your superior officers and be a good comrade to your brother midshipmen. Of course, our discipline will seem hard to you at first, but you'll get used to it very soon if you are what I believe you to be."

"It's very good of you, Sir, to speak so," Lõic answered. His voice sounded rather tremulous, for he had deeply resented his mother's ungraciousness—who for the life of her could not be cordial to the plebeian and self-righteous officer, although she, too, was beginning to ex-

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

perience a sinking feeling at the near prospect of separation from her son, and would have been glad to conciliate his future chief.

The moment for the plunge was rapidly approaching. In a few hours at most she would be far, far away, and a lump rose in her throat at the bare idea that she could no longer, before retiring, peep into the room where Lóic lay asleep, while her heart ached with longing for those past years during which he had depended so entirely upon her.

As soon as they were again alone together, she smiled at him in a pleading, timid sort of way, which was totally unlike her. "If you don't like it here, Lóic," she murmured, throwing her arms about him, "you must tell me, and I will take you away at once."

He forced a laugh. "Now, look here, Mamma, you mustn't worry about me. I'll be as right as a trivet when the first strangeness is past; and remember, I shall write to you every day and tell you how well I'm getting along," he concluded, rather lamely, nervously clearing his throat.

His mother's graceful, elegant figure looked to him oddly out of place in the private salon of the big, gaudy hotel, where they sat close to each other on a hideous crimson satin sofa, and he suddenly noticed how terribly white and shaken she was. He tried to smile as brightly as usual, and to preserve his ordinary jaunty air, but his efforts in that direction were not crowned with success, and he turned impatiently away, for tears, of which he felt dreadfully ashamed, were actually struggling to his eyes. She, poor woman, was gradually working herself into a panic. "I can't bear it, Lóic!" she cried at last, throwing her arms once more about him. "I was a fool to insist upon this ridiculous plan! Come, we will go back at once to Kergöat! I'll write from there to

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

the Commandant and to the Minister of Marine. Come, my darling, my darling, don't stay in this vile place, where you will be maltreated and driven like a slave—beaten, perhaps, also, God knows!"

In spite of his almost furious desire to do as she said, L^oic straightened himself up manfully. "Nonsense, Mammal!" he said, with surprising firmness; "surely you don't want me to show the white feather and turn tail like that. Every boy has got to leave home sooner or later; it's really ridiculous to make such a fuss."

He scarcely knew what he felt; his ears were buzzing and his hands were cold as ice. He shut his eyes for a fleeting second.

Geneviève was now quite beside herself, and absolutely maddened by his unexpected resistance; in an agony of grief she pressed her wet face against his. "Oh, L^oic!" she pleaded, in the same broken accents; "don't leave me; you're all I've got, all I love! Why are you so cruel to me? Is it because I have been harsh sometimes and you are glad now to have the chance of punishing me?"

L^oic said nothing. A very slight tremor went over his determined face; surely these reproaches were filling the measure unnecessarily full, even to overflowing. He moved his lips, attempting to say something, but she did not even notice this, and went on in a rapid, passionate voice: "For goodness' sake, L^oic, don't be stubborn! I did not realize how hard it would be. What does the navy need with you? But I want you, I cannot live without you, and you've got to go home with me—you've got to, that's all there is about it! I'll give you anything you want—anything! You'll do just as you please!" she concluded, with increasing and ungovernable excitement, beating her hands in the air, wild with agitation, and bursting into fresh sobs.

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

Lôic was growing desperate, but he forced himself to look quite calm, feeling that his only chance was to remain, if possible, unmoved. "I cannot run away, Mamma—it would be desertion; I already belong to the navy. You know that as well as I do!" he exclaimed, conquering as best he could the sudden passion of pity for her which threatened to drive everything else away from his mind.

"Nonsense! You're talking sheer rubbish! Desertion! What insufferable twaddle! It's me you will desert. But I see—you're glad to get rid of me! I never dreamed it would hurt me so to leave you here! I never imagined you could really be so cruel, so inhuman, so forgetful of all I have done for you, sacrificed for you, you unnatural, heartless boy!"

Lôic stood up and took hold of both her slender hands as gently and tenderly as he could, and for a moment looked into her eyes. He felt now absolutely resolved to stay, not only because he knew that run away he could not without absolute dishonor, but also because he realized perfectly well, knowing her as he did, that should he yield to this new whim of hers she would be the first later on to reproach him with his own weakness in so doing. Such things on a smaller scale had happened before between them.

"My dear Mamma," he said, coaxingly, "I'm astonished at you! You must be reasonable, and remember that you made me promise to behave myself, and that you're making it very difficult." The poor boy was really on the verge of his self-control, but with great force of purpose he continued to pet and cajole her just as when in other days he had been desirous to obtain a favor; nevertheless, the intense feeling of cold reserve which dominated all his actions prevented him from being entirely natural, and she grew furious.

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

"Oh, so this is the way, is it?" she cried, savagely. "I thought you were becoming tired of my love and of poor, tame Kergoat! You long to be free from me and my idiotic tenderness and care, so as to swagger around quite unhampered; you are burning to become a *traineur de sabre*, a *casseur de cœurs*, you little wretch!" And she began to pace the floor in uncontrollable excitement.

"Now, Mother, I can't bear this any longer," he protested, in a harsh, unboyish voice, looking straight at the blurred, rain-whipped windows. "I can't bear it—I can't bear it, and if you go on like that I—I shall—"

He stopped, clinching his hands together, for the sobs which he had valiantly choked down were again rising in his throat. Instantly he heard a silky rustle, as Geneviève, with a smothered exclamation of pity, glided to her knees before him, for now, suddenly, she knew how cruelly she was herself treating him, and how unjustly. "My own darling!" she murmured, imploringly; "pardon me, Lōic; I'll be good now; I'll do just what you want, my brave, brave boy!"

She held him tightly in her arms, fondling him like a baby, but Lōic, who had grown deadly pale, hastily disengaged himself, went over to the window, threw it open, and leaned far out. The strong, cold sea-air saved him from utter breakdown, and when, almost at once, he turned back into the room, he had partly conquered his agitation.

The rest was comparatively easy, for now Geneviève, subdued and quite exhausted too, gave him but little trouble, and after a silent and hurried dinner, for which, of course, neither had any appetite, he accompanied her to the station and saw her off on her return trip to Kergoat; then, escorted by Kadoc—whom she had left be-

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

hind to look after him for a day or two—he set out to rejoin the training-ship.

It was still raining hard, the ground glistened with liquid mud under the wavering rays of the street lamps, and in the darkness of the cab Lœic felt the sharp night wind on his face, down which a few large tears were running, despite all his efforts to drive them back to their sources. For once he was utterly unnerved, as it was no wonder he should be after such a scene, and in this mood he wondered with that painful wonder that comes upon us when, having chosen one path, we marvel whither the other would have led, how it would have been with him if he had followed his mother home, that home for which he suddenly yearned so passionately that it was all he could do to restrain the overwhelming temptation to turn back, even now, towards the station and take the first train leaving Brest.

With clinched teeth and beating heart, he forced himself to look at the sordid pageant of the foggy town. The shriek of a steam-siren made him start violently, and he realized the extraordinary tension of his nerves. Surely there was something peculiarly depressing and desolate in the very atmosphere of this dismal place!

Slowly the steaming horses trotted up the slippery incline which skirts that deep, black bay which is the war-port, and which is framed by interminable granite fortifications, all grimly similar in their uncompromising ugliness, and by line upon line of cannon. Above them loomed the citadel, the *Château de Brest*, and over the massive walls of the deserted arsenal came the low, rumbling murmur of the distant streets, cut here and there by the sound of some drunken sailor song or fierce, low-voiced quarrel floating up from *Recouvrance* above the dark ramparts. All this was not encouraging; neither

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

was the parley at the gates, where the *permission de dix heures* had to be produced in order to obtain entrance, and when, at last, he was for the first time stretched in his little bunk on board, all things past and present merged at once into a profound homesickness and misery which seemed to prove him still humiliatingly young—a mere child, after all.

The sensation of loneliness—of intense, appalling loneliness—which he felt that night, gave way by fits and starts to an ardor of boyish delight and interest in his new life, duties, and dignities which at length almost entirely prevailed. Not that his happiness was by any means without alloy, for there were still many moments when all his fine plans and prides became but as a crumbling sand foundation, on which his changed personality vainly strove to find a foothold, for even his old independence and dauntlessness here played him false by making him unpopular and dragging him into innumerable scrapes, with the consequent grudges and heart-burnings. Soon, also, the harsh discipline to which he was subjected, as was, alas, to be expected, became so disagreeable to him that his whole life lay in shadow. He was not one to sink under the first blow, to be discouraged by the first difficulty, but he found himself face to face with an undreamed-of situation, a situation bristling with perils for such a nature as his, and which was rendered more awkward by his mother's new and extraordinary course of action.

Separated from her darling, and freed from the immediate influence which the boy's irresistible charm and magnetism rendered so potent, she suddenly took it into her head to develop into a Spartan parent, and her letters—which just then should have been especially tender, encouraging, and cheering—were written in such a strain

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

that they threw L^oic into a state of acute and unreasoning irritation. Moreover, Madame de Kerg^oat saw fit to pour an absolute avalanche of similar communications upon the unfortunate lad's superior officers, from the Commandant down, enjoining them, one and all, to display the utmost severity towards her "sadly spoiled child," thus antagonizing and exasperating them against the boy quite as completely as she did L^oic against herself.

He wrote to her, imploring her to leave him in peace—this was more politely stated—but the true burden of his song was that he now intended to stand or fall alone, that he had had enough of petticoat government, and that she was ruining his chances and robbing him of his ship-mates' regard and of his own self-respect. He further explained that he would end by giving up endeavoring to do what was right if she always suspected him of doing what was wrong; also, he did not forget to remind her, in conclusion, that his present plight was of her own making, and that, therefore, her continual interference was not only entirely prejudicial to his interests, but extremely unjust.

This epistle threw Geneviève into one of those rages that only the truth can inspire, and, sitting down immediately at her desk, she wrote with her bitterest pen a reply so unwise and cruelly worded that, at the moment of sending it off, struck by one of her sudden and unaccountable pangs of remorse, she slipped into its scented envelope a check for a thousand francs, as a salve to the wounds she had deliberately inflicted. The letter, once despatched, however, that peculiar, uneasy desire for perpetual meddling which possesses so many feminine souls burned again through hers, a fierce longing to shake him as she used to do when one of her fits

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

of anger seized her like the hot fire of an ague. Her now unoccupied surplus energies gathered in her like swollen waters behind a dam, and an immediate catastrophe was only averted by the fact that her favorite sister having fallen seriously ill, during a short visit to Kergoat, she was unable personally to carry her wraths, indignations, and extravagant recriminations to Brest.

Indeed, during the time she was on duty in the sick-room, matters began to mend for Lœic. Left to himself, his light-hearted gayety returned to him, he got fairly upon his feet, his fine spirit and singularly attractive personality absolutely pervaded the big, floating school, and, as was bound eventually to happen, he became the leader and the hero of the most turbulent of his mess-mates. Most of these boys were the sons of well-to-do families, and only a dozen or so of aristocratic descent—two or three very much so indeed, Bretons these, bearing beautiful names a thousand years old, which were constantly turning up in their history books, much to their delight and pride—but all alike acknowledged his sway, and many were only too glad to form a sort of adulatory Court about this handsome young Marquis, so eager to scatter gold about him and so keen for the chance of a daring frolic. Having already become partially reconciled to his lot, doubtless his uproarious exuberance would have simmered down after a while, and all would have been permanently well with him, but, alas, his mother's interference again built a wall across his path. Her capricious rule had wellnigh destroyed in him both the power of and the desire for the concentration of his very keen intelligence and uncommon abilities upon hard work. This in itself was no insuperable difficulty, and there were those to deal with it who repeatedly reprimanded and even severely punished him—this he could

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

endure, but not the epistolary rages of his mortified and furious mother, when she heard of his misdeeds in the *Borda's* half-yearly reports, and her perpetual accusation of him to his instructors.

The mentally blind cannot be made to see in a moment as by a miracle, and a woman capable of doing all she had done to bring about such a result was surely incapable of seeing how entirely it was her own fault. She really lost all control of herself, and deported herself, one way and another, in so maddening a fashion that she finally drove the already rebellious boy to open revolt.

Had either Gäidik or Count René been aware of what was happening, the final catastrophe might yet have been averted, but, with the usual inaptness of things, it chanced that both were at that time far away, Gäidik travelling with her husband through the Orient, Count René on a shooting tour near the frontier of Siberia, and, therefore, both quite out of reach of any appeal from Løic had he been minded to seek assistance.

"Like my luck!" the poor boy thought; "Uncle René was always devilish fond of me, in spite of his grand, cold airs when I had displeased him, and he would have seen me righted. My Gäid, too, was forced to go away, whether she liked it or not, and now I'm all alone, and I know I'm *sure* to end by doing something awful if things don't alter pretty soon."

As a natural result of such cogitations, he grew wilder and more reckless day by day. His superior officers could not help liking him, although he gave them, as the saying goes, *du fil à retordre*; they could not help admiring his straightforwardness of demeanor, even when he was at his worst, and the plucky manner in which he bore punishment—a fact which went far to win for him

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

their sympathy. For one thing, he never pleaded extenuating circumstances, as his fellows so often did in similar difficulties. But still his conduct was so contrary to all rules that reprimands grew more and more frequent, more and more harsh, and consequently more exasperating to the high-spirited lad.

Months followed months in this unsatisfactory fashion. Geneviève, having accompanied her convalescent sister to some celebrated and ultra-fashionable baths, kept out of the way, fortunately, but nevertheless Lœic's sky darkened and grew more threatening, and, had it not been for the plucky manner in which he, during a storm, rescued at the peril of his own life a sailor who had fallen overboard from the rigging, it is more than probable that very serious measures would have been adopted against him by the Commandant. His magnificent courage softened even that terrible martinet's heart to such an extent that he overlooked several subsequent escapades, but, alas, without avail. Thanks to Geneviève's tactless and increasingly grim severity, expressed by means of page upon page of close writing, the end was precipitated.

Several times she wrote to him that since he was too mean-spirited and cowardly to accept the discipline to which all proper young men of his age were subjected, she was now determined to put her earlier plans into execution, and to consign him to Mettray; nay, she even went so far as to cause her brother Paul to write him a long homily, ending with the pleasing information that he would accompany his mother when in a few days she came to visit him, Lœic, and that her ideas being entirely in accordance with his own, he would lend her his assistance in all she proposed to do.

This was the climax! So his mother had broken the word given to Gaidik, and was once more thinking of

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

Mettray, and she and her precious brother were bent upon dragging him there. Lōic's anger and alarm began to adopt fantastic proportions. Was he, Lōic de Kergoat, going to be so tragic an ass as to await coolly their so graciously announced arrival? His uncle's sneering face, detested from childhood, had become to him the image of some implacable Juggernaut, and he fairly shrank as he thought of Prince Paul as an arbiter of his fate. It certainly put his nerves on the raw, and shortly after receiving this unfortunate communication, he in a moment of mad exasperation struck one of the quarter-masters on duty a heavy blow in the face—a grave offence this time, and one which carries with it a serious penalty.

Fully aware of this, poor Lōic lost his head at the prospect before him. As soon as the Commandant was put in possession of the facts, it would be all up with him. This time his mother would descend upon him as soon as the news reached her, without the possibility of per-adventure. Ah, would she indeed! He rushed to his quarters, hurriedly packed some of his most useful belongings into a large hand-bag, took all the money he possessed at the moment, and, with a heart full of forebodings and a grim determination to make a fresh start and be alone responsible for himself this time or die in the effort, he made good his escape. This in itself was an exceedingly dangerous and difficult feat to accomplish, but his luck held for once, and he did succeed in evading even the keen eyes of the sentries, both on board and ashore.

“No, by God!” he said to himself, as he ran through the fast-gathering darkness. “I'll not be caged in Mettray if I know it. They'll have to catch me first, and it won't be an easy job.”

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

Strange to say, it did not rain as it almost always does at Brest, but thick, black clouds were hurrying across the sky, and the tops of the trees on the *Cours d'Ajot* were trying to bend themselves double in obedience to the behests of a furious, wet wind which was smashing their leafless boughs and scattering a shower of shredded twigs in every direction. It was quite dark, and he was quite out of breath when he at last reached the railway station, but luck still held, for an express to Nantes was on the point of starting, and, having bought a ticket and secured a seat in an empty compartment, he had the intense relief, some ten minutes later, to see the melancholy old seaport loom blackly for a few moments against the tormented sky behind him, and then rapidly vanish in the stormy gloom.

He had had the presence of mind to snatch up a long Inverness coat from his civilian's wardrobe as he swiftly prepared to leave the *Borda*, thus covering his uniform, and, as he was very tall and manly for his sixteen years, he looked like anything but a runaway midshipman as he boarded the train, his small travelling-cap pulled well down over his eyes. Hardly could he as yet realize that he was for the present, at least, practically out of danger, since having had the rare good-fortune to get himself put ashore by the bumboat—thanks to a magnificent *pour-boire*—it was highly probable that his disappearance was as yet undetected. Twice already he and a couple of other daring spirits had employed the services of the greedy bumboatman in order to spend an evening in town without permission, returning at the dead of night and climbing on board silently and secretly by the main-chains, but there was no returning for him this time, and the present escapade was a vastly more serious matter.

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

Quickly he exchanged his uniform for a suit of tweeds, made up the former in as small a parcel as possible, weighted with his heavy sea-boots, and heaved it out of the window into the first considerable watercourse crossed by the train. All this was done coolly, cleverly, and unhesitatingly, on the impulse of the moment, and then he sat down to commune with his thoughts.

Whether at first he quite knew what he was to do next is doubtful, but as the express rushed along in the teeth of a regular winter gale he began calmly and collectedly to mature his plans. His mother had accused him of cowardice. Very well, he would show her now that he was not afraid of hardships, and that if he had failed to satisfy the naval authorities, he was none the less, on occasion, capable of proving himself to be a very good sailor. "If she thinks I am coming back again, to cry for mercy, she is very much mistaken," he thought, "because I am not. I am, on the contrary, going away from France—at once—to-morrow. It will not be difficult for me to ship on some little trader at Bordeaux, and to Bordeaux I'm going." And, surprising to state, at this thought Lōic recovered his wild spirits, which only two or three times during the long succeeding journey gave way to fits of deep melancholy and depression, and then only when he pictured to himself Gaidik's despair when she ultimately heard of all this.

At last, after a series of exceedingly shrewdly considered détours to cover his trail, he reached Bordeaux and put up at a small hostelry situated in a narrow street near the harbor, and much frequented by the captains of small sailing vessels. His room was such as the luxuriously brought-up boy had never even imagined a room could be, and the air of the whole unlovely region was so sour with foreign flavors and noisome odors that

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

he felt a reluctant shrinking, and would have brooded over the sudden harshness of his fate had not time pressed. But when after nightfall, having purchased an outfit and got himself up in the costume worn by common sailors, he made his way down narrow alleys and squalid streets, and suddenly found himself at the water's edge, a change came over him. His spirits rose, he discovered that his resolution was quite unshaken, and as he heard the slow, muffled bumping of boats against some stone steps leading to the basin he again felt an extraordinary eagerness to be off and away.

Within a few minutes of his arrival there he noticed a well-decked, square-rigged sailing vessel of the old school, with her name, *Gaston - Auger*, written large on her high prow, moored to the bollards on the quay. The outline of the harbor behind its forest of masts stood out clearly in bright moonshine, and the broad, silver rays cut a wide swath of dazzling light through the distant fields of rolling ultramarine.

"The *Gaston - Auger* would do very well," muttered L^oic, and so he jumped lightly on her deck and walked briskly up to a short, dark, thick-set personage—evidently the skipper—who was engaged in spurring on some men transshipping cargo by outbursts of picturesquely nautical profanity.

"Want another hand?" L^oic said to this agreeable mariner, in a purposely thickened and coarsened utterance. The captain turned an eye like a gimlet upon his interlocutor. He had a hard exterior and an unprepossessing countenance, but evidently knew his bearings, and also gave the immediate impression of one quick to make up his mind.

"Not me," he replied, gruffly, expectorating over the rail with extreme precision, as if to show what he thought

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

of such a proposal. "My crew is complete, and we're weighing anchor at dawn." Yet he continued to examine Lõic curiously, for it was not often that he had had the chance of looking upon such a volunteer or one with the mark of the salt element more plainly written upon him.

"That's a pity," Lõic remarked, with an indifferent shrug of his broad shoulders, "because I'm ready and willing to sign articles with you for the trip, but if you're *au complet*—" And he artfully feigned to turn away.

"Hold on there!" the captain grunted, pointing a thick finger towards the slim, blue-jerseyed figure of the applicant, and shooting a singularly crafty look out of his small, restless black eyes. "I'm sailing from here with a full general cargo for Pernambuco in four hours, and, provided it's nothing underhand or criminal that brings you here, I might consider what you say."

He spoke with assumed distrust, but Lõic was far too sharp not to see that he was nibbling at the bait, and having, besides, no intention of explaining his private affairs, he simply said nothing, and stood poised with one foot on the gang-plank, as if ready for instant departure.

"Been at sea before?" inquired the captain again.

"Yes, all my life," was the curt reply.

The skipper measured him slowly with his gimlet eyes. "Makings of a good sailor, perhaps," he muttered, with a gruff laugh, which was more growl than anything else. "Damn me! I've a mind to give you a chance," he concluded, looking aloft at the rigging, where the running tackle was being unbent, and then again he violently expectorated, but this time recklessly upon his own quarter-deck.

"Very well," Lõic replied, indifferently, suiting the

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

action to the words by leaping to the quay. "I'll go and fetch my duds."

"Got any papers?" the skipper bawled after him.

The new hand turned, and by the light of a big reflector lamp hung to the bulwarks looked his future "Commander" full in the face. "No," he said, shortly.

Early morning found the *Gaston-Auger* leaving the coast of France behind at a great pace. She lay very low on the water—for she was heavily freighted—and kicked up awkwardly on a following sea. Lōic, clad in brand-new oil-skins, swayed easily to the motion, and deftly coiled ropes in the most approved naval fashion, peering occasionally through an opalescent bank of fog at his fast-disappearing native land.

Most boys occupying his present unenviable position might have given themselves up to sorrowful misgivings. Not so he, however. The knowledge of the irretrievableness of the step he had taken stiffened all possible doubt and limpness out of his composition. His eyes brightened, his lips curved in a smile of triumph, and in his heart of hearts he exulted. He had all a healthy boy's appetite for adventure, backed by an unusual amount of physical strength and endurance, besides which he was determined to prove now, and once for all, the metal he was made of. So he took the roughness and uncouthness of things in the way of a huge lark.

Meanwhile the crew of the *Gaston-Auger*, from its captain down, watched him covertly and greatly wondered what manner of a creature they had shipped.

Unsuspected dangers, however, were lying in wait for him. The skipper's coarse tongue, for one thing, was not to his liking. Lōic, to tell the truth, was no good except in command, and had much ado to take a blunt order civilly. The skipper, on the other hand, was a

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

truculent ruffian, extraordinarily foul-mouthed, besides being one of those Southern Frenchmen who are born demagogues and instinctively hate an Aristocrat. That L^oic was something of the kind had soon become clear to him; indeed, in spite of his knowledge of the ropes, it was impossible to mistake this lad of more than ordinary good looks and strangely proud bearing for an ordinary sailor or, for the matter of that, an ordinary being, and the irascible Bordelais almost at once began to take infinite pleasure in calling him roughly down whenever the slightest chance offered. Moreover, the crew was also composed exclusively of Marseillais and Bordelais—a sorry race—and one and all were ready to back up their captain in making things interesting for *l'Aristo*.

Poor L^oic! He had, as he speedily discovered, all the ship's company, as well as the captain, the mates, and even the cabin-boy, against him, and all of them ugly customers at that, and fighting fit—a nasty crowd to tackle. He had been from the first far from eager to advertise the fact that he was a gentleman—for that would have been to cause the whole "outfit" to flare up like gunpowder and attempt to "pull him into tassels," as he cheerfully put it to himself; but even if they had not once or twice caught a glimpse of the gold repeater he wore inside his broad, red woollen sash, with its crest in dark-blue enamel, as plain to read as the nose on one's face, every inch of him, in spite of all his efforts, so loudly proclaimed the fact that he played a losing game.

This state of things was not a pleasant change from the milk and honey of his previous experiences—even the life on the *Borda*, now that he looked back upon it, seemed very snug and pleasant—and to have seen him now would have been a considerable shock to his mother.

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

for he was neither so pleasant to look upon nor to associate with as he had been.

Attired in clumsy thigh-boots, heavy blue trousers, a weird flannel shirt, a red clout wound round his neck, and a peaked cap upon his bright hair, he still managed to remain startlingly handsome, but there was something singularly fierce in his whole aspect, and his conversation had become studded with a host of unnecessarily phosphorescent adjectives. In one word, the Head of the House of Kergoat was gradually falling into a savage mood which found vent in ever-ready fists and a brutality of *déportment* quite astonishing, all the more so that the fight was not equal between him and his numerous adversaries, but here, as everywhere else, he was not one to knuckle down.

The voyage, therefore, was for him a season of constant watchfulness. He scarcely dared to take off his clothes or to sleep quietly, for fear of being robbed of his watch and the money he wore strapped around his waist, and, whether he was hard at work—as the skipper took precious good care to keep him—or taking an occasional snatch of sorely needed rest, he was ever ready to spring instantly upon the alert.

Still, his pluck never for a second gave way, and such was his innate love of fighting that even when the whole lot of brutes were raging against him he felt, comparatively speaking, happy. He overlooked the fact that the food was vile, the biscuit crawling, the water foul, the smells of the forecastle—where he had his miserable little bunk—likely to hurt and offend noses far less delicate than his own, and he would cheerfully have overlooked much more in order to prove himself the man he had now determined to be, but these continual slurs, insults, and sneers were less to the proud-tempered lad's taste, and

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

he often suffered cruelly, although unwilling to confess it even to himself.

The *Gaston-Auger* made bad weather of it most of the time. From the very outset the voyage was unpropitious, as she had to fight her way through a regular belt of storms before reaching the calmer waters of the tropics, where a mist of fearful heat caught her, shutting the sea for miles around within a tense ring of oppression. All day long the air shimmered and danced on the glaring level, there was no breath of wind to blow out the sails that hung in dejected cowl, and the ship lay for days on end, motionless on the greasy sea, which circumstance did not improve the tempers of her crew.

One morning, after a most unsatisfactory night of such creeping and crawling, the captain, standing at the foot of the foremast, was staring sleepily ahead, the mate, who had the wheel, was nodding and blinking at nothing, and the men, in a state of general demoralization, were sulkily crouching in the most slovenly manner all over the dingy deck, when Lōic, who had gone below for a moment, came up again, carrying a little tin box containing his sewing-tackle. Silently he sat down on a coil of ropes and began to mend a shirt—for Lōic, whatever the weather, the circumstances, or the difficulties, was always exquisitely neat and well-groomed. His steady gray eyes intent on the newly acquired accomplishment of sewing, his supple fingers plying the needle with a nimbleness a tailor might have envied, he soon began to whistle a jaunty tune.

A sullen ground-swell was rolling the seas into smooth hills and valleys beneath the unrelenting sky, and there was that mysterious something in the atmosphere which should have bidden the dullest being to prepare for danger of some kind, but the wretched lad had by now

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

grown so used to dangers of all sorts that he gave not a thought to the immediate future, and, as a matter of fact, was thinking of Gàidik, to whom he had written a long explanatory letter before leaving Bordeaux, and who was, as ever, the focus of all that was good and loving in him. Moreover, he had not been quite so bullied and maltreated of late, for, to tell the truth, his mates were beginning to fight rather shy of this grim-visaged boy, so different from themselves, who, when fully roused, was as indomitable and savage as a bull-dog. Not so the skipper, however, who had steadily worked himself into a frenzy of hatred against his *bête noire*, and, his temper being particularly raw just then, he deliberately walked towards Lôiç and stirred him from his dreams with a heavily booted foot of quite enormous size, inquiring with expert profanity by what right he disturbed his, the skipper's, ears with his damned whistling.

"Because it suits me!" Lôiç cried, red as fire beneath his brown tan. "Aren't you going to give me a rest?" (*Allez vous me ficher la paix, à la fin?*)

Apparently the captain was not inclined to do so, for with another vicious kick he sent the little tin box flying all over the deck, scattering as it went its entire contents into the scuppers. "If you deafen me with any more of your infernal piping," he growled, in his dirty beard, "I'll beat you to a jelly, and thank you for the chance, you cursed Aristocrat. And now get forrard and clean the foc'sle head and fore-deck!"

With a quick indrawing of the breath, Lôiç jumped up. "You swine!" he said through his teeth. "By God, I'll end by leaving my marks on you!"

The captain—a coward, like all bullies—instantly whipped out his revolver. "None of that, damn you, or I'll shoot you full of holes instead of beating you, you—"

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

The epithet was so vile that the boy lost his head, there was a rush, a dodge, a scuffle, a bullet whistled past Lōic's ear, missing him by a hair's-breadth, and the revolver was his, to be sent the next instant spinning overboard into the sea. Immediately he followed up this success by an assault from both hands and feet most artistically delivered, and, trained as he was by a number of recent fights for his very life, it would have gone very hard with the burly skipper had it not been for the assistance of the crew, who with the quickness of wild-cats sprang to the rescue.

This reinforcement put effective resistance out of the question, for some caught an arm, others a leg, while the good captain, gripping him by the throat, attempted to throttle him. Beside himself with rage, he struggled like a demented creature; how he fought that fight he never afterwards remembered, but three men lay upon the ground before it had lasted many seconds, and the mate was glaring at him from two half-shut eyes, wiping the blood from his mouth as he did so. At last, by the united efforts of the remaining gang, he was bound up hand and foot with new Manila rope and flung down an open hatch into the stinking depths of the hold.

There he was left alone for the time being, with his thoughts, a broken rib, knuckles cut to the bone, and a burning thirst, lashed up beyond all chance of escape—if escape had been possible—and stifled by the intolerable fetid heat of this abode of rats and vermin.

• There are not many who would not, at least, have loudly cried for mercy were they to find themselves in such a plight, but Lōic has been very badly described in these pages if it seems incredible to state that rage was just then still uppermost in his mind, and such a

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

rage that it threw all else—even excruciating physical pain—completely in the shade.

“Cowards! Cowards! Cowards!” he yelled, at the top of his lungs—thus greatly increasing his thirst and exhaustion—“you’d murder me, would you? You hounds!” he cried again. “I wish I could kill the whole crew of you, and I’ll do it, too, if ever I get the chance!” Laborious inch by laborious inch he worked himself, in spite of his bonds, along the reeking planks nearer to the dim light from overhead, yelling with all his might, “I’d like to tell you what I think of your notions of fair play!” He was bleeding profusely from a cut on the forehead, and another gash oozed amid the grime of his cheek. Above, a mob of men, sulky, sullen, and afraid, stood round the coamings of the hatch listening to the defiant words which rose towards them through the thick atmosphere from that place of torment, and wondered at the grit of their victim, still fighting-mad, though the ills of his prison must have gripped every inch of his battered body.

Gradually, however, the infuriated yells ceased, and to Lōic the whole affray began to assume the proportions of a nightmare—he could not as yet realize that men could display such barbaric savagery. And yet it was no dream; the rats that scampered over his prostrate body and the pain from his broken rib assured him of the grim reality of the situation. Hour followed hour, the blazing day was replaced by a baking and breathless night, and thirst and fever so overpowered him that it was only by an heroic effort of will that he prevented himself from at last giving way and shrieking aloud for help.

More than once he sank into a half-conscious state, during which the form of Gāidik seemed to bend over

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

him, her fresh, cool lips to breathe upon him respite from his tortures, her rounded arms to pillow his throbbing head, and this blessed illusion alone preserved him from the utter collapse of reason.

Towards noon on the next day the mate came down to him, accompanied by two sailors to guard from further harm his precious carcass, as Lōic's strength had since the previous day attained a sort of mystic and legendary fame; but, alas, this formidable adversary was by now a harmless wreck of his yesterday's self, and even that callous sea-dog bent down and looked at him by the light of the flickering lantern he carried with a frightened face.

"*Sacré nom d'un Chien!*" he muttered. "If we don't bring him out of this he'll be stitched up within twenty-four hours and dropped over to make a hole in the water—that's the cold-drawn fact." It was the only cold thing just then in that pestilential hole, for the men, as they lifted their victim and hoisted him out of it, carrying him as best they could between them, were bathed in perspiration as if emerging from a shower-bath.

To be sure, it would not have taken many more such jarrings and jostlings to send Lōic away from all this misery to the great blue mystery that lies beyond, and the captain gave a low, apprehensive whistle as he saw him borne past, lividly pale with pain and shock, but game still to the backbone, uttering not a word of complaint, and with sunken, glittering eyes flashing grim hatred at him.

In spite of all his courage and endurance, Lōic felt at times during the last days of that terrible journey an infinite pity for himself. His venture had been one long hardship since he, hitherto the pampered darling of the

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

Fates, had started upon it with no resource save his fists. Its only redeeming point hitherto had been that he was at sea, for that capricious mistress had wrapped herself into his being from earliest childhood in a way too strong to be expressed, and now, like many another dearly beloved mistress, this one was going—or so he thought—to prove his undoing.

In a hospital, with everything at hand that anti-septic surgery could provide, with highly trained attendants about him, his case would still have proved serious enough, but there, among those filthy surrounding, with no other care than the occasional attendance of savage-hearted, resentful sailors, it was practically hopeless. In that sweltering air of the tropics, tainted with all manner of dangerous germs, where a mere scratch may take weeks to heal, the boy struggled wearily with death, emaciated, white as chalk, but courageous as ever. "I'm close on the peg-out!" he said to himself, winking feebly; "but maybe I'll win through yet and get my revenge."

The heat was exceptionally stifling in the cubby-hole in which he lay, and sweat continually dripped from him, while the bitter reek from the neighboring 'tween-deck came in to him unchecked. This he felt, more than anything else, was gnawing away his remnant of strength, and with aching chest and sore from head to foot, he waited doggedly until perchance the captain chose to come and give him his *coup de grâce*, in order to throw him to the fishes, and thus save himself from the dangers of an inquest. His watch and money had been stolen during his sleep or unconsciousness—he did not know which—and he could not even ascertain the flight of those pitiless hours.

Nor were his sufferings the quick things of a few hours,

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

or even of a day or two, and when at last, on a velvet-black night, with only a handful of stars showing in its depths like dazzling diamond flakes, the *Gaston-Auger* made Pernambuco, Lóic was too weak to turn his head on his dirty pillow. Fortunately for him, he had lapsed into a state of blank unconsciousness.

Slowly the night dragged through, and by degrees the sable pall thinned, the sea grew silvery gray, then of a delicate sulphur yellow, and then the great disk of the rising sun, like a crimson coal, leaped above the brightly glowing horizon just as the *Gaston-Auger* glided into a harbor of glassy water and reached anchorage; and more slowly, much more slowly, Lóic awoke to the knowledge of existence again, and found a Sister of the Order of St. Vincent de Paul bending over him where he lay comfortably bandaged and pillowed in a long, whitewashed hospital ward.

CHAPTER XI

Said Fire to Ice, "I am sorry!"
And Ice replied, "No, I am wrong!"
So then they embraced with much ardor and haste
And—found it the same old song.

IN her hotel sitting-room at Colombo, Gäidik d'Aspremont was sitting alone. She had passed the longest months that she had ever passed, or would ever be likely to pass, since she had last seen Lõic previous to her departure for the Far East—the longest, the most anxious, the most nerve-wearing.

Could she regard him as quite safe now that he was matriculated on the training-ship? Again and again she had asked herself that question, again and again she had had to leave the answer undecided between warring hope and fear. During all that time she had more or less counted the slow minutes as she drove or rode over hill and dale, or was fêted, admired, and entertained by all the great potentates of the Orient, and now, at last, almost convinced that her forebodings were folly, and inclined to be incensed at her perversity in thus torturing herself, she was on her homeward trip, thrilling with joy at the prospect of their approaching reunion.

She had just returned from dining *en grand gala* with the Governor of Ceylon, and jewels glittered upon her from the top of her obstinate little head to the hem of her long lace train, as she eagerly rose to take from the hands of her courier a mass of letters just arrived. The

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

first envelope which she opened contained a dozen leaves torn from a pocket-book and written with a strange tremor and shakiness, in pencil. Her throat became suddenly dry, her heart pounded, and her knees all but knocked together as she rapidly ran her eyes over the blurred, slanting lines, while a cold shiver shook her in spite of the warm fragrance of the night pouring in at the windows—shook her till her diamonds sparkled like spirits of flame. Then she ran across the immense salon, and, opening her husband's dressing-room door, called out to him in a voice which he scarcely recognized:

“You must send word to the yacht at once! We'll have to be off immediately—Lôic is dying!”

That incoherent letter pencilled in the Pernambuco hospital had arrived at the same time with the one written by Lôic on the eve of his madcap departure from Bordeaux—which had followed her on and on during a trip to wild and rarely visited corners of India—and thus both blows were now falling together upon her with bewildering violence.

The long voyage home was made with the dizzy swiftness which the possession of a fast steam-yacht and of great wealth alone can insure, but it seemed for all that extraordinarily slow to Gäidik.

It would be impossible to calculate how many times a day she paced in a fever of impatience backward and forward on the snowy deck of the *Armorik*, gazing unseeingly upon the sun or moonlit surface of the sea, blue or silvered, deepening to star-spangled violet or brightening to luminous green or gold-shot rose.

Sometimes she would sit down for a little while, but almost at once she was up again, walking, walking, walking always, to and fro, her unconquerable Breton tenacity and pride alone enabling her to control her countenance

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

and to preserve her extraordinary self-possession in her relations with those about her. A sensation almost of fear came over her husband as he watched the white-cheeked, hard-pressed little creature so singularly mute in this deep sorrow and almost intolerable anxiety.

* * * * *

It was a gay May day, all a-blush with blossoming hawthorn and fragrant with the glowing petals of gorse and bracken, when a hired dog-cart driven at full-speed by Gäidik dashed up the avenue at Kergoat, the light equipage following the horse with a succession of leaps and lurches sufficient to terrify anybody but the overwrought Gäidik and the impassive Breton sitting back to back with her. The Duchess's eyes had a curiously cruel gleam in them, and as she traversed the park she did not vouchsafe even a passing attention to the exquisite multitude of delicate scents and sounds rioting under the opulent old trees, nor to the far-reaching ocean, which this time had put on its bluest robes to honor her return.

Urging on the horse with a lash of the whip, she skirted the house and drove round to the southern front, where the sun-rays fell unbroken on the ivy-garlanded terraces and the granite steps felt warm beneath her feet as she raced up them two at a time.

Madame de Kergoat was sipping her after-luncheon coffee in the library when Gäidik burst in upon her—very much after the manner of a hurricane, it must be acknowledged—for all the self-control in the world was now unavailing to keep in bounds her anger and indignation.

“What news have you of my Løic?” she exclaimed, casting all ceremony and usage overboard and omitting all preamble.

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

Geneviève actually dropped her cup and jumped to her feet with a cry of astonishment.

"Good Heavens!" she gasped; "you here? Where on earth do you drop from? What do you mean by such an entrance?"

"I've just told you. I'm here to find out what has become of my L^oic," G^aidik harshly repeated.

"Your L^oic!" echoed the Marquise, a faint attempt at raillery kindling amid the forlornness of her efforts to recover her tottering mental equipoise and mask her extreme embarrassment. "Your L^oic, indeed!"

"Mine! Yes, certainly, since there evidently is no one else in the world to take an interest in him—*c'est le cas de le dire!*" G^aidik interrupted, an angry color mounting to her white cheeks. "I wonder," she continued, with a pathetically sudden little droop of the corners of her mouth, "whether you remember your solemn promise to be more forbearing, more just to him—and yet he is dying in a pauper's hospital at the other end of the world!"

"Rubbish!" Geneviève exclaimed, facing her all-too-literal daughter, flushing hotly, eyes flashing as brilliantly as G^aidik's own. "Oh, you incorrigible accuser! The whole wretched escapade was in no way my fault, and, although I have no account whatsoever to render to you, yet I am ready to prove this to you or to any one else that may consider it his or her duty to question me!"

"That's as it may be, but now pray begin by answering my question; don't hold me in suspense any longer, for—" And here there was a perceptible break in G^aidik's strained voice. "I can't bear it—I can't—Where is L^oic? Tell me quickly, because wherever it is I'm going to him!"

Sharply Geneviève glanced up at her daughter, and, judging rightly that it was expedient for her to speak

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

at once and without too many circumlocutions, she said, hurriedly:

"He is on his way home; I moved heaven and earth to find him, but so cleverly had he covered his tracks that it took a very long time for the detectives I employed to trace him to Bordeaux and to discover the name of the vessel upon which he had shipped—indeed, it was rather desperate work"—here her own voice trembled a little—"but at last we did find out. Then I cabled at once to the French consul at Pernambuco. He discovered that Lōic, having met with an accident during the last days of the voyage, had been taken to the hospital, but had been discharged after four weeks, and, refusing all assistance or offers of help and advice from the hospital authorities, who had taken a fancy to him, had at once embarked as third mate upon a small sailing vessel bound for Stavanger, in Norway, where he must shortly arrive." She had said all this in one breath, as if eager to justify herself, and, while listening to her, Gaidik, the self-unconscious, forgot several trifles that might properly have weighed with her—forgot that she was fairly played out, forgot that she had tasted no food worthy of the name for an impiously long time, forgot also that her mother would never forgive this abrupt and meteoric apparition, and, obeying impulse and instinct alone, removed herself with such expedition from that astounded lady's field of vision that before she could recover from her surprise the Duchesse d'Aspremont had vaulted into the waiting dog-cart and was driving away at breakneck pace, eager just then only to put as many miles as possible between Kergoat and herself.

And after that many days elapsed before those two met again, but during this period, by intimate experience,

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

Geneviève learned how exceeding great is the forlornness of the remorseful. Yes, remorse she had now in plenty to keep her company, this strange, erratic, capricious woman, remorse that kept her awake at night, and made her rush during the day into a succession of amusements invented to help the leaden-footed hours upon their way. Indeed, she tried many methods of distraction, and for a time none of them availed her, but little by little her momentarily shamed and softened mood hardened into a bitter resentment against her son that soon became the steady background of his absent figure.

The days following Gäidik's extraordinary appearance upon the scene were hopelessly wet, and violent, scudding rains beat tattoos all day long on the windows of Geneviève's boudoir, completely drowning the glory of the gardens and park. A thick vapor, half steam, half mist, rose from the sea; her wandering eyes detected no break in the horizon, and at length, looking at the drenched, mournful prospect, she began to wonder why she had ever desired above all things to go all the way to meet Lõic at the far Northern port where he was to land. "Let Gäidik go, since Gäidik is always concerning herself with his affairs," she thought, angrily, and so, all tenderness expunged from her heart, she ceased to wait and watch and hope and expect, she ceased to gaze hungry-eyed at the great picture by Koszak hanging above her *prie-Dieu*, which represented Lõic as a child on his pony, *Pantin*, both gazing out of the canvas with lifelike mischievousness, and ceased to plot and plan the killing of the fatted calf, which occupation had served to beguile away many a weary hour.

At last she suddenly set off for Biarritz, taking an enormous number of servants and horses with her.

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

There she was, of course, at once one of the gayest in the aristocratic procession continually filling this frivolous sea-side resort. The band on the esplanade played—she concluded—more inspiring accompaniments to her thoughts than had the rhythmically sad waves at Kergoat, and the picturesque chain of the Pyrenees—seemingly so near at times that she felt as if she could have touched them with the amber ferrule of her gracefully flounced sunshade—appeared to her a far more fitting *mise-en-scène* for her grievances than the honest Breton cliffs so dear to her unruly children. Nay, even the sibilant babble of voices—Italian, German, Spanish, Russian, English—amused her and rested her after the harsh Gaëlic consonants which had ended by falling dirgelike upon her ear in her phantom-filled solitude.

It therefore came to pass that when Lôic, tall and still very thin, sunburned to the tone of a Portuguese orange, but stalwart and square-shouldered as ever, stepped ashore at Stavanger, he found only Gäidik and Gäidik's husband to welcome him, which they both did most enthusiastically, and with so much pleasure at seeing him alive and well that they totally forgot to utter the faintest reproach. Indeed, it was fortunate that such was the case, since there was now on the lad's face the stubborn, resolute look of a fully grown man, and one not easily to be thwarted—nay, there lurked in his gray eyes a harsh and masterful spirit which had not been there at his departure from Bordeaux, and which would undoubtedly have precipitated a new crisis between him and his mother had she been there to observe it.

Whenever they looked at his sister, however, those eyes softened wonderfully, a smile almost wistful played about his lips, and the deepest tenderness became audi-

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

ble in his roughened voice whenever he spoke to her, but the whole nature of the boy seemed changed, nevertheless, and it remained for the future to prove whether this change was for the better or otherwise.

They feasted the returned prodigal on board their beautiful yacht—which seemed strange and almost fairy-like to Lōic after the dingy cabins of the grime-bespattered crafts he had lately inhabited—and when Gāidik's glance rested on his labor-torn hands, his coarse, blue clothes, and at the many other signs of hardship and suffering about the young sailor, she asked herself what enduring harm—or good—he might have taken during these past months spent among rough and disorderly crews of hard-drinking, hard-living men. He had been brutalized and coerced, had, later on, himself commanded, and stood watch on narrow, storm-buffed decks; he had looked into far-away harbors and seen life clearly from one of its most rugged coigns of vantage.

At all events, Lōic was evidently glad to have come into port. He was his sister's shadow while they stayed at Stavanger, that quaint Norwegian seaport, the crooked, irregular streets of which turn and twirl in bewildering *lacets* about the southern shore of one of the most beautiful fjords of the great Northland.

Their joy at being together again was so deep that they never spoke of it, but she often gazed at him with the light of a profound, motherly tenderness in her eyes—a light so wonderful that the lives of all men are incomplete until it has been shed upon them, a light which he had never seen in his own mother's passionate eyes, and which made him look up at her in an amazement of worship.

“Ah, don't—don't,” he whispered one day; “it makes me feel all I've lost by not being your son instead of

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

your brother." She took his arm silently, and they strolled away over the short velvet of the grass, all dotted with pink-tinged daisies, along the calm, blue waters, where every now and then a rising fish broke the mirror of its smooth surface into endless circles of melting light beneath the late afternoon sky.

After a day or two Løic succeeded in rigging himself out after a fashion in the little, unresourceful Northern town, and the *Aarmorik* swung out of the huddle of boats in Stavanger harbor, brother and sister leaning over the rail and watching the tall, gray spires of its cathedral fade away into the silvery mist of a beautiful summer morning, she at least with feelings too complex to be analyzed.

Would this grim training have benefited Løic? The eternal question revolved in Gåidik's mind with the same regularity as did the propeller of her yacht in the sunlit waters of the fjord. The happiness of at least three lives hung on the answer, which so far she could not honestly give even to herself. Suppose that that answer held by the future proved to be "no." What then? So far Løic had hardly mentioned his mother—clearly he was not over-eager to meet her after all that had taken place, and it was only when tossing on the North Sea and making full headway for home that, casually turning to his brother-in-law one evening, as they were smoking together on deck, he quietly remarked:

"Where am I to go next?"

"Speaking from the deepest candor of my soul, I do not know," was the disconcerting reply given with puzzled emphasis. "I wonder, my dear chap, whether you would fall upon and rend a well-meaning individual who would venture to offer you a word of well-meant advice?"

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

Lôic threw his smoked-out cigarette overboard and replied, simply, "I would accept it gratefully, whatever it might be, for I'm very much at sea in more senses than one."

"Well, then," his brother-in-law said, leaning forward a little and gazing into the troubled gray eyes fixed upon him, "why don't you take your courage in both hands and go to Biarritz with the apologies which you really owe your mother, whatever her own mistakes and errors may have been. You cannot, after all, expect her to be pleased with your performances—can you? And let me add, in a whisper, that peace is never too dear to purchase."

"How can I go," Lôic exclaimed, impatiently, "when she herself has gone so conspicuously out of the way to show that she does not care a damn whether I arrive safely or not, and has fairly run away from Kergoat the moment she could reasonably expect me to turn up there?"

"You Bretons are the coldest-blooded animals south of the Arctic Circle, besides being the most difficult to manage," the older man rejoined, with some irritation. "You and Gäidik, for instance, everlastingly chain up your natural impulses as if to yield to them were nothing short of a crime. *Your* natural impulse just now, Lôic, should be to patch up a very unfortunate, not to say a very dangerous, state of affairs. Your mother has absolute power over you—at least, practically speaking she has—and, if you can find a ray of comfort in the information, I may as well tell you that you alone can bend her will, if you choose to take the trouble to do so. I presume that I am wrong to speak to you as I do. I should play my part as elder brother better, and come the sage and wise adviser over you; but you see my

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

wisdom consists just now in endeavoring to avoid another clash between you and her, for no good can come of it, and, besides, all these revolutions and upsets are literally killing Gaidik. The present situation is a nasty one, which nothing short of a miracle can disentangle. For Heaven's sake, my boy, try and work that miracle, if not for your own sake, at least for your sister's. Your good mother has taken the bit between her pretty teeth, although, doubtless, she still hopes to reconquer the hold she has over you by means which in her present mood may be extremely unpleasant—for, I repeat, she has great driving powers. There is a certain Mephistophelian sharpness about some of her methods which should make you desirous of being on good terms with her, besides which she is afraid of nothing, not even of a scandal, if that be the only means of gaining her point. What I say may seem a little crude, but it nevertheless is the truth."

"Yes—I know," Lõic reluctantly confessed, "but don't you see that the minute I begin to humble myself before her she'll provoke me into committing further follies by her very triumph! So what's the use?"

"You never can tell beforehand what a woman—more especially your mother—will or will not do. And even if she exacts her mental pound of flesh, don't you think that you are strong enough to endure the strain now? Go to her, Lõic. Take my advice. I have spoken! What's more, I think that Gaidik thinks exactly as I do on the subject." Then, putting his hand affectionately on his young brother-in-law's shoulder, the wise counsellor concluded: "Put what I've said in your pipe and smoke it—at your leisure. You are too fine a lad to waste your energies in profitless fights with women—believe me, such opponents break the strongest of us on the wheel."

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

When his brother-in-law had departed down the companion-way, Lōic began to stroll backward and forward beneath the midnight sky, cogitating with himself and glaring at vacancy as he endeavored to make up his mind. Suddenly he stamped his foot, much to the astonishment of the man at the wheel watching him from afar. "Am I afraid of her? *sacré nom d'un chien*," he exclaimed aloud, thereby transforming his solitary hearer's astonishment into positive stupefaction.

No, he was not precisely afraid of his mother, but, nevertheless, his whole soul revolted at the mere idea of the nagging, reproaching, and tormenting he well knew lay in wait for him along the path recommended by his philosophical relative.

For two whole hours he paced the deck, until the sinking moon illuminated a fleece of dove-hued clouds that hovered above the horizon; the outlines of shadow melted and faded into neutral blackness, and finally the sea-rim became roseate with imminent sunrise; but when he, too, at last, went below, his choice was taken, and taken according to his brother-in-law's advice. Perchance he had done so for Gâidik's sake, perchance *par force majeure*, but still there remained the fact that he was now determined to take the first step towards reconciliation.

Having conquered his almost invincible reluctance, he decided to make the sacrifice of his feelings as gracefully as possible, and, when he actually found himself speeding across France on his way to Biarritz, affection for his mother began to reassert itself, and it was with a positively contrite and softened spirit that he alighted at the gates of her villa.

She was sitting on a broad balcony overlooking the wide prospect, where the level rays of a brilliant sun

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

turned the rocks to masses of shining bronze, the sea itself to liquid gold. The lofty summits of the Pyrenees, in the distance, seemed almost unsubstantial against the dead-turquoise tints of the sky—ideally soft and pearly, like floating images of a dream.

She distinctly heard the carriage which had brought him turn on the thickly gravelled drive; she heard him ask a question of the footman on duty in the ante-chamber, then the words, "All right, you need not show me the way," in the same quiet voice. There was now only the length of a room and the thickness of a portière between her and her boy. Her slender hands went convulsively up to the soft laces at her throat, as if they were choking her, and in the mere second that elapsed before he entered she wondered what would happen during the next few minutes, wondered whether she was longing to cover him with kisses or strangle him. She was still wondering when he came in, his handsome, sunburned face singularly brilliant with a half-shy, half-wistful, and utterly winning smile; but her infernal pride and temper made her remain immovable, and outwardly, at least, most cruelly indifferent.

Three paces from her he stopped short, amazed by her frozen attitude, her superciliously raised eyebrows and rigid lips, her whole expression, which said as plainly as words could have done, "You miserable wretch, fall on your knees and implore my mercy!" And at that all tenderness and remorse fled from Lóic's heart like a startled flock of birds, while the winsomeness of his expression changed to wonder and something very like contempt as he took in her gracefully reclining pose in a long lounging-chair, the perfect steadiness of the delicate hands clasped loosely around the handle of a fan, and the elaborateness of her white afternoon toilet.

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

"I have come to apologize to you, Mother, for the anxiety and trouble I caused you, and to express my regrets," he said, in extraordinarily measured tones, waiting still three paces off for a sign granting him permission to approach. His heart was hardening within him in a singularly complete fashion.

"I do not think," she said, judicially, "that it signifies much to you whether I forgive you or not, or, for the matter of that, whether I care for you or not any longer. Is it not rather absurd to go through this mere empty form?"

Löic stood looking down at her with eyes made rather terrible by the white heat of his strongly suppressed Breton anger—a very special and dangerous kind of wrath. In the silence the wavelets outside were beating against the pebbly beach, as if in a breathless haste to speed the fateful moments on their way by their gentle rustling, regular music, while Geneviève continued to lean back in her chair, staring harshly at her son.

"I propose in the future," she continued, in the same incisive manner, "to adopt an entirely different régime with you. Tenderness and leniency are not safe feelings to display towards such a nature as yours—as I have to my sorrow discovered. I must ask you, also, to remember henceforth who you are, even when impelled by your strange personal tastes to descend into the mire from the honorable estate to which you were born. The Kergoats have been proud of the Heads of their House—up to now—and I dislike the thought that a son of mine should be the first to alter this order of things."

A queer, twisted smile passed across Löic's rigid features—the smile of a prisoner bound to the torture-post who has made up his mind not to cry out.

"What do you intend to do with me?" he asked, suddenly finding his voice again.

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

"I have not decided as yet, but at present you can remain here for a few days—until I give you further orders." Her cold gaze softened for a fleeting instant, for, as usual in her encounters with him, when the force of her anger had spent itself, she was already beginning to alternate between fury and forgiveness—a critical state for any woman, and especially for her—but Lōic noticed nothing of this partial awakening of tenderness, and stood before her "at attention" without relaxing a muscle.

There was another short silence, tense and throbbing, like that which precedes the breaking of a tornado. Below the balcony the little wavelets hurried on to the assault of the rocks, measuring, one could have sworn, the beats of their two hearts. At length Geneviève saw Lōic glance at the small travelling-clock standing with many other pretty trifles at her elbow, and make an almost imperceptible movement towards the door. At once her heart gave a great leap. An uneasy apprehension that had begun to grow within her at the newness and strangeness of his attitude sprang at once to the full stature of a maddening fear and took entire possession of her. Was he going to run away from her again? What had she done? How could she prevent him from doing so, if he chose to take the law once more into his own hands? What a fool she had been! Some instinct bade her rise to her feet and stand before him, no longer unbending and severe, but merely the beautiful, passionate mother she really was, with swift tears welling in her eyes, and both arms extended towards him beseechingly.

"Oh, Lōic! don't draw away from me like that," she cried. "Can't you see that my heart is breaking, that I love you, love you, love you, in spite of all you have done and may yet do?"

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

"Hush, Mother!" he said, without advancing an inch. "It is best that you should say no more."

She understood what was passing within him, standing there so quietly before her in his marvellous self-restraint, and threw herself almost at his feet in a wild, incoherent frenzy of self-reproach and self-abasement.

"I will do anything you wish!" she sobbed, wildly. "I will never, never scold or reprove you again, but, oh, Lóic — oh, Lóic, forgive me and be my own darling little son again!"

She knew the note to strike now, and struck with a sure hand, but it had been touch and go this time between mother and son.

Book 111

The Net

CHAPTER XII

Would you never know
Tears and vain regret?
Never yet
Paid that bitter debt.
Gentle speech and slow,
Nor I trow
Midnight's pillow wet,
Never yet.

The Clock, I.—M. M.

ON a mild, gray day in early September, Geneviève and Lóic were sitting together on the sands of a picturesque little Vendéen coast village.

This spot seemed but a poor substitute for the grandeurs and magnificences of Kergöat, but to them in their recent reunion after yet another long and eventful period of separation, its extreme loneliness and simplicity were welcome.

Behind them at a short distance was the one hotel of the place, a broad-spread, low building, with blue-slate roofs, diamond-paned windows, and a profusion of balconied rooms oak-panelled and quaint enough to suit even Lóic's ultra-mediæval tastes. Scattered along the beach lay a score or so of little cottages inhabited by fisher-folk, while in all other directions beyond this scanty line of thatched buildings stretched desolate moorland, grayish green in the foreground, and emerald-hued where in the distance it merged into broad marshes waving with tall reeds and slender, blossoming water-plants.

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

To this place Fate, in the shape of a fashionable physician's orders, had brought Madame de Kergoat to recruit in its quiet and uneventful atmosphere the strength sadly sapped by the life of social excitement, which was meat and drink to her. "Here at least," he had blandly remarked, "it will be impossible for you either to tire or enjoy yourself, Madame la Marquise, which is exactly what you need."

There was, indeed, a soul-soothing serenity to be found in that rarely visited corner, while with the aid of rides, drives, and sails to the exquisite islands which entwine the sea in their long, low curves within a few miles of the shore, the hours passed very pleasantly.

As may readily be imagined, the arrival in so tiny and unpretentious a place of the Marquis and Marquise de Kergoat, with an interminable train of servants, horses, and carriages, had created a considerable stir, and an immense amount of speculation was aroused concerning the real object of such puissant Seigneurs in selecting this solitary and melancholy hamlet for a stay of several weeks. It speedily became apparent that, whatever their motives might be, they did not include visiting the few châteaux in the remote neighborhood, nor becoming acquainted with the yet fewer *baigneurs* quartered in the antique hostelry—the entire first floor of which they themselves occupied—for they never spoke to any one, and scrupulously shunned all occasions of meeting any one at close quarters, even on the beach. It of course never occurred to these excellent gossips that the mother and son were actuated by a mere temporary desire for quiet, a sudden craving for solitude and complete repose; and from morning till night tattle concerning them occupied all tongues. The few bolder spirits who tried to pass the barrier of Geneviève's reserve had had occasion

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

to find out that too great an audacity generally goes before a fall, for their eager advances were met by that great lady only with arctic inclinations of her lovely head and a cloud of much wrath upon her fair brow.

If any soreness was felt by the natives on account of these repeated snubs, it was a very passing emotion, however, soon effaced by the gratifying prosperity which the "distinguished visitors" brought with them, and they were soon looked upon as interesting eccentrics conferring much glamour and kudos upon the whole countryside by their sumptuous presence.

Geneviève was just then perfectly happy. She had the one thing which always filled her heart with joy—the undisputed possession of Lōic; moreover, on the afternoon just referred to there was a charming lavender-hued sea pailletted with silver at her feet, a balmy, fluttering breeze around her, and the few scattered bathers, clad in stripes of deplorably crude coloring, disporting themselves in the shallow ripples of the bay, were distant at least half a mile from her critical and easily offended eyes. All this made her really enjoy her cigarette, made the very croaks of the innumerable sea-mews circling in graceful evolutions above the wavelets sound almost harmonious, and caused a soft and dreamy smile of content to linger on her lips, especially when, in languidly enumerating all these blessings to herself, she recalled the supreme joy—that Gäidik was very far away indeed—on the other side of the world—and not likely, therefore, to come and tarnish for her the full and complete delight of Lōic's presence.

"Is not this absolutely perfect, my dearest one?" she asked of her idol, who, lying at full length on the sand at her feet, presented a very fine picture of what young Aristocrats should be, and nowadays so seldom are. She

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

herself was really amazing in her everlasting youthfulness of aspect, with her ethereal draperies of simple batiste sublimized by filmy laces and Arachnean embroideries, her broad *capeline* wreathed with white lilac, and her all-pervading *bouquet* of extreme elegance. She was—it could not be doubted—as beautiful as ever, perhaps more so—beautiful even in broad daylight. She looked to ill-natured people perhaps thirty-five, but not a day more! Egoism, as a clever observer once declared, is far more effective as a preservative of loveliness than Ninon de l'Enclos's never-discovered secret.

Beneath the rosy lining of her white silk sunshade she beamed on Lóic, nudging him occasionally with the tip of her dainty little tan shoe when an especially ludicrous peignoir-wrapped figure sauntered up from the "bathing beach" towards the hotel.

"What are you staring at?" she said, suddenly, seeing him look rather intently at something behind her, and, as he did not answer, she put up her long-handled eye-glass and turned irritably around to discover two women walking towards the hallowed spot she herself always occupied at that hour; and she, who was a figure of grace even in what she called "a plain little batiste frock," frowned her most imperial frown at these two provincial persons, evidently rigged up in their best bibs and tuckers for this holiday. They wore silk dresses of daring hues, barbaric in make and guiltless of any attempt to tone down their raw brilliancy by so much as a gauzy scarf, to the general effect of a *toilette de plage*.

"Who in the world," Geneviève began, "can these people be? They are, I honestly believe, fifty degrees more impossible than any we have seen here as yet, and what do they mean by passing so close to us?"

Lóic, versed in the ways of the Powers that were,

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

offered no comment, and especially avoided giving vent to his opinion that the elder of the two intruders, in spite of her ludicrous finery, was what he termed, below his breath, "a stunner!" But still the shrewd, suspicious mother had an uneasy sense that there was something alarming behind this prudent silence, and the curiously prolonged gaze of the *persons*—who perceptibly slackened their pace as they approached—filled her with righteous indignation. At the thought that this was done for Loïc's benefit, Geneviève felt a mist before her eyes, a tightness at her throat, and a vague and worried pain all over her which she already knew well, having experienced it whenever her tigerish jealousy of him was awakened. So she had a moment of uncomfortable abstraction, but, energetically shaking herself free from it almost immediately, she pointed with her eye-glass after the two strolling figures reluctantly drawing away, and said, with a little contemptuous laugh:

"Even here the vulgarity of our time makes itself felt, not to mention its audacity. Fancy wearing light-colored silks—silks here in the morning and with plumed hats and high-heeled shoes in the sand! But I suppose you're too much of a man to be able completely to appreciate such incongruities; or has your sojourn out West irretrievably ruined your taste and good sense? Come, out with it; tell me whether you are still able to judge correctly?"

"What do you want me to tell you, Mother, dear?" he asked, a little impatiently. "I've never in my life set eyes on these two *particulieres* before to-day, if that's what you are eager to know, and I certainly do not admire their style of dress; but what have we got to do with them?"

She scrutinized him sharply.

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

"Hand on heart?" she said, doubtfully. "You never saw them before?" To which curious question he answered, supporting her scrutiny without in the least flinching:

"Hand on heart, Mother, dear."

"Well, then," she uttered, with a little sigh of relief, "keep out of their way if you can possibly do so, for they are indeed sorry specimens, which I would scarcely have expected to see here."

The women, in their gaudy dresses, were moving slowly down the beach, and L^oic, from beneath his straw hat tilted over his eyes as he reclined at his mother's feet, glanced covertly after them, while she, having relapsed into her reverie, smiled a soft, mysterious little smile.

Now Geneviève de Kerg^oat's detractors—and she had many—claimed that it was behind her gentlest smiles that the greatest danger lurked, and averred that she was then least of all to be trusted. It may be doubted, though, whether anybody existed who could really judge this strange woman, whose inveterate habit of acting on the impulse of the moment—especially where her son was concerned—was so fatal to the success of her plans.

After his terrible seafaring escapade, L^oic, temporarily reconciled to her—on the basis of her complete surrender—had thrown himself heart and soul into the manifold pleasures which her immediate environment so lavishly afforded him. He had at once become a great favorite in her immense social circle, had played polo, ridden steeplechases, and in these and other amusements often less innocuous had scattered money broadcast about him with her entire sanction and approval. The more serious duties of life, however, came last, as usual, and

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

she was well content that it should be so, as long as he remained at her side and was as much as possible her companion; turning a deaf ear to earnest and repeated remonstrances not only from her brother-in-law—who went about at that time with a graver and graver face—but even from her own brother and chief counsellor. Nay, she positively encouraged her son in the self-indulgent, excitement-seeking life which she herself loved.

As time went on she made a pretence of resuming the plan of education she had—so she said—carefully designed for him. He spent some weeks in England under the care of a singularly high-priced and facile tutor, and travelled about, later on, with another equally complaisant gentleman of great merit, but all thought of any of the customary educational finales—the University, St. Cyr, Saumur, the Naval School, or the Polytechnique, as the case might be—had been abandoned because the Marquise did not care to do more than suggest, once or twice *en passant*, such a serious interruption of their now so delightful existence together.

“Put the lad in the army, or let him return to the navy; there are no other careers for one so full of life and spirits,” Count René had pleaded, advised, and finally thundered; but “the lad” had had enough of the sea just then, the republican army of France appealed not at all to his haughty mother’s ideas, and so Lôiç had become a curious educational waif, moving on and on, in the grandest possible state, in search of some ideal plan which would infuse into him all necessary knowledge—presumably during his sleeping hours, or in any other as yet uninvited and painless manner!

Of course it goes without saying that he involved himself in a series of scrapes that tended to increase in magnitude as he grew in mind and body. Through these it

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

was always Gâidik who steered him, hastening half across Europe to the scene of action if need were, while his mother, as usual, fretted and fumed and did the wrong thing if anything at all. At such moments the little hand on the helm was a very steady, courageous, and loving one, but the very minute she was compelled by the many tyrannical exigencies of her position to relinquish it, Lôic began once again to toss hither and thither on every alluring wave, and to answer to every fragrant breeze blowing from Pleasure's shore.

It is but fair to say that his path was beset with temptations that would have been almost invincible for any young fellow, however well trained and bred. Not only was he extraordinarily handsome, but he possessed a winning charm which no woman, whether high or low, ever knew how to resist. Essentially thorough-bred, with a great deal of latent recklessness under his Breton impassibility, and when he so wished it a singular softness in the depths of his dark-gray eyes, veiled by unusually long lashes, it is no wonder that great ladies and smaller ones should make a pet of him, or fall unresistingly at his feet. One and all, moreover, found it excessively pleasant to have for one's squire a youth who did not know what it was to be without magnificent horses, pockets full of money, and luxuries of every possible nature; and with it all a dashing, captivating way of managing everything and everybody that was in the last degree *Grand Seigneur*.

One pre-eminent trait he had inherited from a long line of Breton ancestors, the extremely enviable and rare talent of never showing either discouragement, disappointment, undue exhilaration, or embarrassment—in one word, he fully deserved the title of "*Votre Imperturbabilité*," with which many fair ones had adorned him. Alas, that

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

imperturbability is unfortunately not synonymous with steadiness, nor the restraint of one's outward demeanor with self-control. This eminently gifted youngster, so very good to look upon, so keen-witted, so precocious in tact and *monde*, received an indelible impression from that period of unbridled luxury, over-indulgence, and over-petting, for, thanks to its unlimited possibilities, frail beauties taught him far too early to eat the sweet-bitter apple that is always held out to such as he by the hand of modern Eve.

Sometimes, for she was inconsistent in this as in all else, Geneviève's anger rose if she learned of these *péchés mignons*, and, her savage jealousy once aroused, this frivolous, superficial, and extremely *mondaine* woman had adopted ultra-puritanical and Catonian views, which found vent in denunciations so bitter and cruel that he, though none of the least courageous, had often trembled beneath the lash of her scathing diatribes. And that is where the situation began to become—as Count René had so wisely predicted—an absolutely impossible one. Lœic, carried quite out of himself by sheer exasperation, finally made it clear to his infuriated mother that the word "duty," which she now so constantly invoked, had been one hitherto left out of her maternal vocabulary, save on rare and exceedingly selfish occasions, and that her own line of conduct had been far too egotistical to give her any title now to preach renunciation or sacrifice to him. Fortunately, his personal tastes were naturally fine and delicate, which prevented his sinking from the first into debauchery. Moreover, the thought of Gaidik lifted him above anything really low, but nevertheless his conduct was far from praiseworthy, and finally, after a quarrel of unequalled violence, he had for the second time taken the law into his own hands and

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

sailed for America, where during the best part of two years he had ranched in Montana and Wyoming.

Now, however, he had been prevailed upon to return home in order to celebrate his coming of age, and he came—no longer a boy, but one who had lived a man among men in the wild places of the world—to begin life in his native land as his own master, a little weary of roughing it, more than a little conscious of his share in the old quarrel, and fully determined to do all within his power henceforward to avoid bickerings and differences.

He had gained wisdom by experience—since experience is a synonyme for one's mistakes—to the point of candidly confessing to himself that on more than one occasion he had acted like a consummate fool. This time, however hard his admirable composure was taxed, he intended to remain firm at his post and display the most praiseworthy patience, nor would he clutch greedily, ravenously, at the pleasures of the moment, tearing life's blossoms with both hands, but be a model son, however. *L'homme propose*—and with poor Loïc, alas!—*la femme dispose*—of this he was soon to become convinced.

Rather early on the morning after the appearance of the two beplumed visitors upon the beach, Loïc was walking down the sands. He had gone straight from his bed for a swim to a place some quarter of a mile away, where the long Atlantic breakers had scooped out within a necklace of rocks a pool wide and deep, temptingly inviting one to take a header. Now he was on his way home to his mother and breakfast.

The dunes rose gently from the water's edge in a series of undulations gilded by the low sun and topped by straggling blackberry-bushes covered with dark-purple fruit, or sparsely furred with short, salty grass mingled with sea-pinks and silvery thistles.

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

Lôic, clad in a dark-blue bathing-suit, a bathing-towel thrown over his shoulder, swung rapidly onward, looking neither to right nor to left, when he suddenly became aware of a voice calling loudly for help. It was a feminine voice, youthful and not unmelodious, although—perchance owing to the exigencies of the moment—it seemed to lack polish and delicacy of modulation.

"Hello!" Lôic said to himself, "who's in trouble so early?" and without a minute's hesitation he went scrambling down the coarse shingle towards the voice, picking his way from stone to stone at a run.

Close to the waves there was another pool smaller and shallower than his favorite plunge, but still quite deep enough to drown an ordinary human being not possessed of the gentle art of swimming, and therein, clinging to a projecting rock, was a woman, clad—or rather partially so—in scarlet and blue stripes, her tousled locks crowned with a brilliant top-knot of fluttering silk.

That she was in no great danger Lôic saw at a glance, and in his easiest man-of-the-world accents he called out:

"I'll be with you in a second—pray hold on!"

In a twinkling he had cleared the short remaining distance, thrown down his towel, and, bending far over, had lifted the dripping bather gallantly to terra-firma.

"I trust you are not hurt?" he said, bowing slightly, while his gray eyes smiled frankly and a little mockingly into her brown ones, which had lost all signs of terror and had swiftly assumed a half-shy, half-pleading, and wholly tender expression.

"You should not be so venturesome!" he continued, still smiling mockingly, a little amused and not at all taken in by her pretty *minauderies*. Here at close quarters with her he had at once recognized the "stun-

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

ner" of yesterday, and he owned to his thoughts that though perhaps not particularly refined in appearance, she was yet decidedly good-looking, that her soft eyes were beautiful (expressive and wistful and luminous, despite their coquettishly drooping lashes), her complexion of cream and roses, and her dark hair very becomingly disordered. With a deep inclination of her head, and in ardent accents, she said, dramatically, both hands pressed to her heart:

"You are too good, Monsieur le Marquis—too noble! I owe you my life!"

Loïc could have laughed aloud. The ludicrousness of the situation struck him forcibly, and, indeed, realizing what his mother would say could she only hear and see what was passing, he had a hard struggle to keep serious.

"Oh, you little flirt," he thought, "with your ineffable *simagrées*! Do you think you can fool me?" If the rescued dame had only laughed—even smiled—it wouldn't have been so bad, but she was as solemn and tragic as a Roman Vestal, and he thanked a merciful Providence that she did not think it incumbent upon her to fall at and kiss his feet, in token of her impassioned gratitude.

"May I escort you to your residence, if you are at all faint?" he forced himself to say, with now preternatural gravity, looking calmly into the big, brown eyes, which from languishing had become two lively points of interrogation.

"No! No! I am all right now, Monsieur le Marquis," she responded, fairly gargling her bourgeois throat with the grandeur of his title. "Thanks to your magnificent strength and courage, I am quite well—and oh! so grateful to be saved from a watery grave, if only for the sake of my beloved children.

"Your children? You must be joking!" quoth the

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

highly entertained "hero." "Why, Madame, you are but a child yourself. But pray say no more about what I have done; I merely lifted you out of a puddle, and it is a trifle unkind of you to make fun of me."

"Fun of you! Oh! Oh! O-o-o-oh!" the lady exclaimed, her pink face more tragic than ever as she lengthened her vowels in passionate deprecation of such an idea. "You who rescued me so bravely, when my strength was all but exhausted, when I was on the point of sinking forevermore into this abyss!"

Lôic's mirth broke out openly this time. "There you are at it again!" he managed to say. "It is the height of uncharitableness on your part to pretend that I accomplished anything difficult or—risky."

The fair stranger considered this protest sorrowfully, and proceeded pleadingly to set him right.

"No, no!" she said, with quite a killing drop of the eyelids and a deprecatory little shake of the head. "You do not understand; I will explain—later when I have the bliss of seeing you again, which I trust may be soon. You have saved me, that is certain, but my emotion is too great to say more now," and with a gazelle-like bound she fled.

Lôic's merry eyes clouded with a little mist of scorn. "*Sacrée poseuse!*" he muttered, as, making no effort whatsoever to follow her, he threw his towel once more round his neck and walked slowly up the steep, sandy pathway to the top of the ridge upon which the hotel stood.

Still a little disgusted, at the end of his climb he went through the cloister-like veranda and in at a side door leading to his rooms, where he rapidly dressed himself, smoking several post-ablutive cigarettes the while, and, much to his valet's amazement, bursting two or three

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

times into regular guffaws of apparently causeless laughter.

When he joined his mother in her wainscoted and mulioned private *salle à manger*, she was not reading, in spite of the seeming evidence of an open volume of memoirs lying on her lap, and she welcomed him with a rather ominous and inquisitive glance of her keen, black eyes.

"Had a nice dip?" she asked, rising stiffly, and, without offering to kiss him, taking her place at the breakfast-table, drawn up near an open bow-window. She seemed, in her pale mauve morning-gown profusely clouded with Valenciennes lace, as fresh and healthy as a sea-breeze and fully as imperious and overbearing.

Lôic, who was already carrying his cup of chocolate greedily to his lips, choked suddenly and violently.

"You seem amused," asked Geneviève, smiling frostily. "May I inquire what has aroused your merriment?"

"Certainly," Lôic replied, rather tremulously, manfully struggling for gravity, but really shaking with suppressed laughter.

"Well, then, do!" she ordered, staring at his crimson, strangling face. "Stop laughing, can't you?"

"You're a darling, Mother, dear," he said, subduing with a violent effort the twitching muscles round his mouth, "but only a poor dissembler this morning. Why don't you confess that you were watching my performances through your field glasses?"

Geneviève, with a gesture that sought to be restrained, but suggested a pounce, picked up two rose-buds which had fallen from the table *jardinière*, and flicked them out of the window with great accuracy of aim.

"You should not come and enact your love-scènes within range of my balcony," she replied, viciously.

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

"Well, I'll be blown!" Lœic exclaimed, inelegantly but very forcibly, his cheerful face clouding a little, and in almost a peremptory tone he continued: "For Heaven's sake, Mamma, don't be tragic—I've had enough of that sort of thing for one morning! Dear me, how you do vex yourself over trifles!"

"Perhaps the meeting was fortuitous?" she replied, with resolute incredulity.

"Extremely so!" Lœic declared. "Oh, you needn't shrug your shoulders, for that's a very accurate description of the incident!" Here was no case, he thought, gleefully, that called for tact or diplomacy, or any delicate weapons. Perfect truth could be used, and he would use it, since his cause was so good. "Don't be silly, Mamma!" he therefore continued, with entirely reawakened cheerfulness. "The whole thing can be stated in a dozen words—I'll tell you how it was. That woman we saw yesterday on the beach is after an aristocratic scalp-lock, and played a transparent little comedy for my especial benefit. *Voilà tout!*"

Geneviève looked at Lœic's handsome, bronzed face for a moment in silence. She was not to be so easily appeased.

"You looked extremely ridiculous in your rôle as rescuer," she stated, sarcastically.

"I know. Thank you for reminding me of it, since it also happens to be my opinion," he mildly acquiesced; "but if you could only have seen the victim!" and he choked violently for the second time.

"What a terrible noise you make, Lœic!" Geneviève cried, impatiently. "Had I not better rise and pat you on the back? We'll have to pack up and leave here if the *péronelles* of this sylvan solitude begin to run after you—as that class of women seems to do everywhere else, alas!"

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

Geneviève firmly held—and with some reason—the creed that under such circumstances mockery was the tone best calculated to bring about a crushing finale, but, like many other creeds, it does not suit all personalities alike. To Lôic mockery was particularly obnoxious, especially now, when he was inclined to be self-righteously full of his innocence.

“You may otherwise be forced to add to your luggage a trunkful of photographs, locks of hair, and other keepsakes,” she went on, perversely, driving the “fatal exception” up to the hilt in her own cause. “Of course it must be rather lonely here for such a Don Juan as you, and, after all, the eminently desirable affairs I can now clearly see peeping above your horizon will make your stay much livelier. In a series the viands will doubtless prove delicious! Or shall we say a hash made up of native remnants and warmed over for your especial sake? *Un agréable ragoût*, mixed as my metaphors!”

Lôic laughed quite as if he was not annoyed, but he was sitting as stiff as a poker in his chair, and there was a queer, intermittent light in his eyes like flashes of precursory lightning. The joke was becoming a sultry one.

“You’re very foolish this morning,” he said, with, for him, incredible rudeness. “That is not the way a mother should speak, I assure you.”

Geneviève was momentarily at a loss how to deal with such outrageous outspokenness. “Do you intend to perfect my maternal education?” she sneered. “That’s very thoughtful of you! I don’t want to make things unpleasant excepting you force me to do so, and if you promise me never to speak to that woman again I’ll let the incident drop, but not otherwise.”

“You are extraordinarily kind,” Lôic muttered, getting quickly out of his chair and standing before the

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

window in a very rigid and uncompromising attitude. His good resolutions were rapidly taking flight. "I don't want to be again treated like a little boy who's been caught stealing a pot of jam, and, what's more, I can take care of myself here or anywhere else. I hope you don't mind my speaking straight out what I think? No? Well, before my departure for America you interfered in a most unwarrantable manner in matters you should have pretended to ignore—I dare say from excellent motives—but still it did great harm. Now, pray remember that we came here to have a rustic little time all by ourselves and that you promised not to quarrel with me. That I must hold you to. I'm not eager to speak to anybody, as you have been already able to see, but neither am I going to give any ridiculous promises."

Geneviève's reflections were not enviable. She saw that she had conjured up one of Lœic's most uncomfortable and angular moods. Just then he was all elbows—mentally considered—all elbows and unbending joints; but, as usual, when anger had the better of her, all the tact, the finesse, and the diplomacy with which she usually conducted her worldly affairs deserted her, and she made yet another *faux pas*.

"We will continue as we began, then, and you will not speak to a soul," she said, brutally, "or else I'll go away and leave you to rusticate with your choice new acquaintances."

Lœic frowned, but by a strong effort he conquered the bitter words rising in his throat and decided to try a little coaxing. Really, it was ridiculous to let her go on like that and risk a new falling-out for so paltry a cause.

"Will you be good?" he therefore banteringly exclaimed, catching both her little wrists in one of his strong hands and looking laughingly into her fierce eyes.

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

"You must behave nicely, *Madame ma Mère*, and give me a good example. Our life hitherto has been a series of mistakes. Don't let's begin again. So run along now, put on your habit, and we'll go for a gallop on the downs. Why should we stay here squabbling when there are lovely empty dunes and a great, exhilarating sea-wind within a yard of us? He bent quickly, kissed both the slender wrists he still held, and, playfully lifting her from her chair, carried her like a feather to the door of her dressing-room, calling out as she disappeared within, a momentarily conquered woman: "Make haste! Wind and tide don't wait for peevish Marchionesses!"

"I've mastered him!" Geneviève thought, exultantly, even while she quickly obeyed him. "*Mon Dieu*, what a strong, handsome fellow he is! No wonder women fall in love with him at first sight! He lifted me as if I did not weigh an ounce, and yesterday how he raised from the ground that orange-tree and its tub that four men could not succeed in putting into place, and without the slightest effort, too! He is very much like his father."

For a moment she fancied that she was twenty years younger, in the great park at Kergoat, with her lord's handsome eyes looking down tenderly at her. "Hé used to be so fond of me, poor fellow!" she mused, coquettishly fastening her faultless riding-hat before the glass. He lay in his grave by the restless Breton sea, and she seldom remembered him now, but still he had loved her as no one else ever had, and somehow she suddenly felt a tinge and twinge of regret.

"Poor Lôiç!" she murmured, softly, to herself, and so went to join his son, who, by a time-honored family tradition, had been called after him.

It had been an unusually warm morning, but now a cool wind was blowing from the sea, the whole land

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

was enmeshed in a web of gold, and high in the zenith a few feathers of snowy cloud floated on the deep, azure sky. The tide was on the ebb, and the smooth, hard sand of the lower beach, still wet from its recent retreat, made an ideal riding-track.

Quite reassured and proportionately exuberant, Geneviève sat graceful and lithe in her saddle, breathing deep of the vivifying air, in a fever of high spirits and really sparkling with wit and brilliant repartee. She took infinite pains to make herself agreeable, and was amply repaid, for their *bonne entente* rose in crescendo with more frequent bursts of laughter as they raced side by side on the broad, shining, ripple-fringed sand strip.

Lôic rode his favorite hunter, *Cœur de Roi*, an extremely difficult animal with high breeding in every line of him, bright chestnut in color, darkening well at all points, with firm muscles quivering beneath the satiny skin, and a small, lean head incredibly intelligent and eager. His rider could not let him go to his full will, for, although Geneviève's horse was plentifully provided with good racing strain and reckless dash, he could not have held his own with a "crack" fit to win the Derby, and thus *Cœur de Roi* champed impatiently at the snaffle and fretted a little, his delicate ears twitching nervously with a great desire to be let into his greyhound stride and to sweep out till his neat hoofs hardly touched the level sands.

This sort of thing made Lôic's heart beat fast with a sort of headlong delight as his knees pressed closer into the magnificent hunter's flanks, though his face remained very quiet. Surely a minute of life like this was worth ten years of ordinary jogging, and, bending forward, he patted the glossy neck caressingly, murmuring quite unconsciously, "Was there ever a woman half worth a perfect horse?"

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

Geneviève burst into merry laughter. "Ha!" she cried, saucily, "I'm charmed to hear you say that, *tout amour-propre à part*, because I'm very much of your opinion!"

Inwardly Lœic made a swift reservation in favor of Gäidik, who he confessed to himself was better even than any perfect horse—a great concession in a man so passionately fond of the equine race.

"I beg your pardon, Mamma," he laughingly apologized. "I did not realize that I'd been speaking aloud. How you would enjoy the West, though! There is nothing over here that can outshine the sensations one experiences there. To run after a bunch of unbroken horses that won't be caught, no matter who throws the rope, is something to live for. Our ponies, too—they were little dandies, wise and quick on their feet and alive with enthusiasm. You should have seen them at work! No feint hoodwinked them, and the immense seriousness of purpose they displayed made the matter sometimes one of high comedy; and, *flink!*—ah, nothing but lightning could be quicker; their muscles fairly flowed under their skins!"

"And tell me, Lœic, was it the ponies alone you admired out West?" Geneviève asked, teasingly, her big, black eyes flashing mischief at him.

"Why, no," he replied, slackening the pace and turning in his saddle almost to face her. "I made many good friends there. The punchers, most of them, are as interesting and lovable as the ponies. It's all very well to talk of gentlemen, but I truly believe that the only place where the genuine article is still to be found is on the plains. They speak another language than ours—in more senses than one—but theirs is the winning one in my opinion."

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

"And the feminine contingent?" she questioned, with half-closed lids, smoothing her horse's mane with her platinum-topped riding-stick.

"That's a different affair. On the plains—I mean at the frontier—there are no women at all, and in the clusters of wooden shanties which do duty for towns out there, and are usually glorified by such euphonic appellations as *Frozen Dog*, or *Panther Creek*, or something equally simple and striking, the woman is merely—the—female of man."

"Not very dangerous, then!" she laughed.

"Oh, it depends—sometimes—*l'heure—l'occasion—l'herbe tendre*, vide old Lafontaine. You see, it's all according to the point of view and the state of one's mind."

"Your state of mind, methinks, is always un reassuring on that score," she observed, with a mocking little wink, "but I'm trusting to your promise now, so let's be off towards our lunch." And, touching her hunter with her tiny spur, she set off like a whirlwind, while he, playfully threatening her with an upraised finger, cried after her:

"You perverse woman, you know that I promised nothing!"

When people are in good temper such sayings become of notable insignificance, but subsequently Geneviève was destined often bitterly to remember that particular one.

Just then, however, Lôic's straightforward, wholesome soul was brimming full of fun—the little scene of the morning was forgotten—and the ingredients of his thoughts were amusement, *joie-de-vivre*, and hope for the future. Being no analyst of self, he could not have said which one preponderated, but what he knew perfectly well was that he felt uncommonly "fit" and happy, and that Gaidik's absence was the only shadow in the

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

picture. So on they flew, covering mile after mile at the same swallow-like pace until *Cœur de Roi* undertook to display his theatrical talents. Some pigs and sheep suddenly hove in sight, trotting peacefully down a narrow bramble-bordered path leading to the beach. *Cœur de Roi* had witnessed similar processions since his tenderest youth, but probably out of revenge for the comparative inaction and decorum forced upon him during the preceding hours, he treated it as an altogether terrifying and unusual spectacle. Down went his lean, aristocratic head, and after standing stock-still for two full seconds, as if unable to take in at one glance the full horror of the apparition, he reared straight on end, twisted himself round, and bolted.

That particular portion of the beach unfortunately abounded with steep banks and rocky outcrops, where a fall would have been a precarious venture for horse and rider, but Lóic steered the crazed animal straight past the latter and over the former with amazing skill, allowed him to dash at speed up a narrow, meandering path between two thickets of whin, and finally managed triumphantly to land him in the midst of a dense growth of young sand-pines, which, enmeshing the culprit's legs, brought him to a harmless and inglorious standstill. That feat accomplished, Lóic bent over and contemplated the quaking, trembling, lather-drenched animal, in whom all ambition seemed to have been suddenly extinguished, and muttered reproachfully but in his gentlest tones: "You silly fool, you ought to get an A number one thrashing for this, but it wouldn't do you any good at all, so get yourself out of here and try to behave a bit. This must be your off day."

Truly *Cœur de Roi* extricated himself from the baby pines and tall genesta bushes as if he were a model

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

of discretion, and was looking as demure and mincing as a dancing-master when he was rejoined by his stable-comrade, arriving at full tilt with an extraordinarily irate lady on his back.

"That's a nice trick he played you!" she cried, pulling up alongside. "I hope you thrashed him soundly. He's been working for this the whole morning."

"No, I didn't; I don't cut horses to ribbons for a trifling bit of temper," Lōic answered, calmly; "and, what's more, I'm inclined to forgive a good horse anything."

"Nonsense! I'd flay him alive," she hissed, through clinched teeth, furious at the fright she had sustained, "I'd give him a bucketing that would take the fine edge off his temper for a couple of weeks at least."

"No, you wouldn't," Lōic quietly responded, once more setting *Cœur de Roi* going, and, in order to cut short all further recriminations, he began to sing in his melodious barytone:

"A-workin' in de cotton-fields,
Ah really thought A'd die;
De sun so hot, Ah froze to deff—
Susannah, don't you cry!"

"You are the most exasperating boy, sometimes!" Geneviève exclaimed, irritably—"simply odious!"

But Lōic was not to be interrupted thus, and the chorus of his song went flying down-wind like a silver arrow:

"Oh, Susannah!
Don't you cry for me;
Ah'm gwine to Louisiana,
Wid mah banjo on mah kneel!"

This persistence made Geneviève slow down and give him an offended look intended to rebuke his levity.

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

"Nice song, that!" she observed, dryly. "Know any more of it?"

"Loads!" Lôic replied, with feeling. "You just see! When we get home I'll haul out my banjo and give you the rest to put you in a good temper. It's much jollier than your grand melodies made in Germany, which always make me ready to cry for something I've forgotten all about."

"Lôic!" Geneviève expostulated, really shocked, for he was passionately fond of really fine music, as she well knew, and she herself was what since his return from the States he termed a regular "crank" on the subject.

She would have provoked a discussion of the subject, but at that moment, turning into the last bend before reaching the hotel, they came abruptly face to face with two feminine figures which could scarcely have produced a greater effect upon Geneviève if they had sported Gorgon heads — to wit, the fair *Inconnue* of yesterday and her inseparable and somewhat gawky offspring, both gorgeously appalled in pink and white and azure, with such an abundance of fluttering laces and streaming ribbons that *Cœur de Roi* shied and gave for a second time unmistakable evidences of a desire to bolt.

As they caught sight of the Kergoats they hurried forward in vast excitement, stumbling awkwardly over the loose gravel in their agitation, and courtesied to the ground. Geneviève lifted her purely ornamental eye-glass to the bridge of her delicate nose, stared, her cold eyes imperitantly opened to their widest extent as if she could scarcely believe their testimony, and then turned her head away with the air of one who has just seen a wholly disgusting object, while Lôic, inwardly cursing, hastily removed his hat.

"Damn it!" he ejaculated, as soon as they were out of

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

earshot of the two women, who had turned scarlet; "you are really too bad, Mamma!" He was very angry.

Geneviève transferred her indignant looks to him at once. She did not like this rough and blunt way of putting things. It was a Kergoat habit which she herself adopted when she felt like it, but so much the less did that make her admire it in others. So she asked, severely, looking at him with unutterable scorn, "Why—because I won't consent to admire such guys for your sake?"

"Not at all," he answered, curtly, "but because there is no sense in being so incredibly rude to perfectly harmless people." And as they had now reached the hotel porch, he helped her to alight, threw the reins of both horses to the waiting groom, and silently followed her up-stairs and into the sitting-room.

"I know all you're going to say," she declared immediately, dashing her stick and gloves on a table with extraordinary violence, "but you may as well hold your tongue. You used to make your sister dance to your piping, but you won't make me, so you need not think that you'll ever ram those she-beasts down my throat. You'll have to leave me out of such combinations, if you please."

"Is that the tone you mean to take with me?" he asked, sitting down on the edge of the table and looking her straight in the eyes.

"Certainly, if you don't pull up and change your attitude. I've warned you once already, so don't be an ass, Lóic! I, for my part, don't propose to see you sink back into your old ways, and let me tell you candidly that you're on the high-road to it."

Lóic's face darkened. "Don't be silly!" he said, frowning. "You know very well that it was not worthy of you to cut those wretched women as you did, and I wish

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

you wouldn't make me all these scenes. Good God! you'll end by making me regret that I ever came back!"

"Are you yearning for your 'outfit'—as you call it—that you named after Gäidik?" she demanded, tauntingly.

"Upon my word!" he cried, thoroughly exasperated. "Talk of the rows made by jealous mistresses! Why, they are milk and water to this."

"Well, if they have as much provocation as I have, I can't blame them!" Geneviève continued, fiercely. "Men like you are enough to exasperate any woman. You cut your own throat every hour in the day, and think yourself all the better for it. You will listen to no reasoning, obey no dictates save your own, and you think that you can have your own way always, always, always!" She spoke with bitter emphasis, her transparent little nostrils dilated, her lips curled back ferociously, her eyes emitting positive fire-sparks, and Lœic, looking at her, felt a sinking of the heart.

"I don't know," he said, wearily, "why I should stand such bullying, and for nothing, too."

"Bullying? What do you mean?" she interrupted. "Are you too hopelessly dull to see that I'm only speaking in your best interest, warning you of the pitfalls that have come near to destroying you a hundred times already? You're enough to make me give up ever saying a word to you at all."

"I trust you will if it makes you fly at me like this. It is really awful to have one's nose bitten off a dozen times a day through no fault of one's own." His patience was now nearly gone, and no wonder.

"Very well, I'll say no more, if that's the way you take it—excepting this: If you get into a fresh scrape, I tell you frankly I shall not help you out of it this time. These intrigues of yours are positive quicksands in which

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

you flounder and sink until pulled out by main force. If you are going to jump into a new one now, don't expect me to throw you a rope—that's all. I'll let you be sucked down without the slightest remorse. I hope you comprehend," she repeated, stamping her foot, "although to speak to you is just as profitable as attempting to fill a sieve with water. You have a morality altogether your own, which reflects no sort of credit upon its inventor, and a stubbornness equal to that of a vicious mule. I don't envy your wife, if you ever marry. She'll be a perfect martyr, that's what she'll be!"

Lôic's ears were tingling as if he had just had them boxed; honest anger absolutely prevented him from saying a word in reply, and for the life of him he could not imagine what had stung his mother so.

As was his wont when really angry, he appeared more than usually impassive, but inside he was boiling with rage and mortification; the more hotly because he had so solemnly promised himself not to follow her any more upon the squabbling *terrain* which she so dearly loved. All his life long people had found it advisable to be circumspect in their mode of addressing him, and, excepting the captain of the *Gaston-Auger*, no one but this mother—who pretended to love him so passionately—had ever handled him with such brutality; no, not even when, a wofully helpless tenderfoot, he was serving his apprenticeship as a cowboy, getting up in the dark, bitter winter mornings to pitchfork the bedding out of the stables, had he been thus spoken to, thus humiliated! He felt that she was trying to make him absurd, odious, contemptible in his own sight. Afraid to trust himself to speak, he slowly lighted a cigarette, and began to follow with sleepy eyes the smoke-rings he carelessly blew into the air.

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

This was too much for Geneviève. This calm, outwardly quite impervious to insult, seemed to her intolerably insolent, but that he should even refuse to fight was absolutely insupportable, and, suddenly pushing past him, she rushed through the door-curtains and noisily locked herself up in her room.

XIII

Tongues of sombre flame
Vain regret doth mark,
In the dark,
Whispering, "Once a spark
Were we!" Oh, the shame,
The cruel blame!
The sad heart doth hark
In the dark!

The Clock, II.—M. M.

It was Sunday morning—an exquisite Sunday morning, graced by a brilliant sun, a gentle sea-breeze laden with wholesome, briny smells, and an unruffled sea of a very dark blue, plentifully besprinkled with shifting, dancing lights. Summer had now definitely given place to the mellow Vendeén autumn which ever testifies to an honest desire of making itself agreeable. A soft haze of etherialized moisture hung over the distant marshes, and the gorse and bracken made great pools of gold above the gently undulating dunes.

For a few days a surprising peace had reigned between Lóic and his mother, thanks to his untiring efforts to please her in all things. It had long been a maxim with him that courtesy is one of the greatest duties which one owes to those with whom one is most intimate, besides which he wisely foresaw that life would become absolutely impossible if he did not humor her every whim; so, though promising himself to shorten as much as he could a tête-à-tête which seemed to create so many occasions of quarrel,

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

he showed a constantly smiling and cheerful face, and devoted his entire time to her amusement. But she was not satisfied even so. She was certain that so much amiability must needs conceal abysses of deceit.

That very morning she had developed at breakfast a strange and unexplained desire to shun the pretty, square-towered gray church, where, since her arrival, she always heard mass—driving thither with Lōic along a delicious mossy road bordered by thick fields of heather—and had entreated him to go without her, urging that it was the duty of the higher classes to give a good example, and deluging him with such a flood of proverbial philosophy that to church Lōic had actually gone, although rather surprised at this latest fancy; for, since their last grand scene, his maternal tyrant had scarcely allowed him to be for five minutes together out of her immediate neighborhood.

Hardly had he disappeared than Geneviève, fresh-faced as a baby after its bath, and dressed with exquisite simplicity in pearl-gray étamine, rustled across her dressing-room, caught up one of her favorite lace mantillas from the sofa, and hurried out by the side entrance, humming, as she went, under her breath:

“Voulez-vous entendre
Comment ça finit,
Mon ami!
Comment ça finit!
C'est la pie au nid
Qu'il faut prendre,
C'est la pie au nid,
Mon ami!”

She considered this old Breton refrain extraordinarily appropriate to the present occasion, and her *sotto-voce* rendering of it was, therefore, downright “vicious”—if one may thus express it—vicious and full of meaning:

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

"C'est la pie au nid
Qu'il faut prendre,
C'est la pie au nid,
Mon ami!"

Yes, she intended to catch *la pie au nid*—the wily magpie—napping.

It had naturally been a nuisance, during the last few days, to curb her tongue and make a lot of nasty little secret inquiries; which had permitted her—or, at least, so she thought—to peep with X-ray precision at what she fancied to be the very bones of the situation.

To be sure, she had as yet been quite unable to substantiate her deeply rooted belief that Lōic was playing her false, but the idea that there was something wrong going on behind her back roused in her a kind of frenzy, emphasized tenfold by Lōic's extraordinary quietness and pliability. All this made her as nervous as a cat, and her hand trembled a little as she opened her sunshade and set off to undertake a fine, bold piece of detective work, for she at one and the same time hoped and feared to make some important discovery. So wrought up was she, indeed, that the idea of spying upon her son did not seem to her in any way a discreditable proceeding. She put it to herself that it was her bounden duty to verify her suspicions, to forestall any manœuvres on the part of the obnoxious *Inconnue*, and thus, quite blind to the questionable taste of her proceedings, she hurried along, shaking with suppressed excitement.

This obnoxious female was, she had discovered, the very consolable widow of a *capitaine caboteur* (master of a small trading-schooner), one Billot by name, who had, some years before, succumbed to the dread clutches of delirium tremens. The most vivid imagination could not conceive a more obvious type of consolable widow;

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

moreover, she was about thirty-five, and, as has been above reported, she had a very pretty face and figure. Her inseparable daughter, aged seventeen, was not by any means as good-looking, possessing a snub nose, large, pale-blue eyes—in no way beautiful, but misleadingly innocent of expression—looking out from under a typically unintellectual forehead and an elaborate tangle of brown curls. Nature had never turned out, even in her most humorous moments, a mother and daughter more dissimilar—physically at least—for in other respects they had many points of resemblance. The fact that they both had exquisite pink-and-white complexions and admirable teeth created an impression of likeness that totally disappeared at a second glance, and served only to emphasize their essential difference of type.

Madame Billot possessed great perspicuity, and, in many ways, was a remarkably clever woman. As soon as a benevolent Fate had rid her of her drunken and brutal spouse, she had made up her mind that she was not going to revolve for the remainder of her natural life in the humble circles to which she had been born, and in spite of her lamentable lack of distinction she had already managed to ascend several rungs of the ladder above that assigned to her by a just and discerning Providence; but Rose was a colorless sort of girl, a convenient foil to this gay little mother, and, after a fashion, a chaperone with whom she could in all propriety embark upon many adventures impossible for a "lone, lorn widow" to undertake in straitlaced provincial France without her entirely losing what caste she may possess.

These facts, collected with infinite patience by Geneviève, passed vaguely through her mind as she hastened silent-footed over the short salt-grass behind a hedge of tall furze. Two merrily hopping sand-pipers turned

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

wary eyes skyward at her approach, and with a sudden whirl of their tiny wings followed their tentative glances into the ether; but little did the Marquise heed their graceful antics. Her ire had been aroused by what she called the Billot woman's simpering finesses; and, being naturally of a passionate and somewhat vindictive disposition, the mere fact that this person dared to cast her nets around L^oic set her revolving all sorts of impracticable schemes of vengeance. The thought of his own discomfiture, if she could catch him flagrantly disobeying her orders, was just then sweet to her taste, and from past experience in similar affairs she had a sort of serene confidence that, given the opportunity, such would be the case—hence her refusal to accompany him to church!

She walked quickly along for some twenty minutes, following the screened path which would lead her presently to the little house where the Billots had rented rooms—a little house owned by a fisherman rather better off than his brother sea-toilers, and which stood in the middle of a neat little garden sheltered from the destructive ocean winds by an eminently picturesque thicket of sand-pines.

Finally she turned a corner—the last before that “den of iniquity,” as she mentally denominated the Billots' temporary abode—gained the foot of the ridge, up which she climbed breathlessly, afraid to arrive too late—for on the mellow air the *Elevation* chimes of the little church had long ere this been wafted towards her—and was just in time to see, through the capricious interstices of the furze—and that with extreme distinctness—L^oic's trap turn quickly and rather recklessly into the tiny gateway of the “den” and pull up sharply before its honey-suckle-draped porch.

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

Horror of horrors! Beside Lōic sat a woman in a brilliant pink dress and an immense and elaborate pink hat, whom Geneviève instantly recognized as Madame Billot—daughterless for oncel The Marquise's quick eye took in the whole scene in a second: the woman's flamboyant attire, the way she put her foot on the step as she alighted, her giggling graces, all spoke of a certain class abhorrent to her. Ah! how revolting men were, and how unspeakably false and credulous and imbecile! So Lōic was really interested in that "she-beast," and coquetted with her in spite of all her maternal warnings; for there was no mistaking the bantering attitude of the tall, manly figure in white serge and straw hat, the arm imperceptibly lingering about her slender waist after lifting her down, the teasing, merry laughter as she urged this royal catch to enter, the momentary hesitation and the final yielding, accompanied by a well-known little shrug of the broad shoulders which always meant with him a sort of careless *Kismet!*

It never occurred to the infuriated watcher that, after all, the whole affair was so far perfectly harmless that the fact of his driving the widow back from church on that sultry morning meant very little from a man like Lōic, and that if she willed it the game was still completely in her own hands. No! She accepted the shallow evidence of her eyes with eager avidity; nothing warned her against a too-prompt credulity, and she did not accord him even the benefit of the doubt. Indeed, a rage such as even she had never as yet experienced was rapidly making her absolutely incapable of any sort of cool judgment. Whatever she might have intended to do in the event of such complete success as she had just attained, she was possessed now by but one idea, and, turning on her heel, she literally flew down the road to where Lōic's groom was

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

slowly walking his horses. To jump in, snatch the reins from the hands of the amazed man, and put the mettlesome cobs to their best pace was the work of a mere moment.

"Ah! that's the way, is it?" she muttered, between clinched teeth, flicking the sleek flanks of the pair of chestnut beauties with the whip, quite indifferent whether the still gasping servant heard or not—"that's the way, is it? Well, I'll show you a trick worth two of that, my dutiful son!"

She was completely beside herself, recking nothing of consequences, and in a mood to kill had she at that moment come face to face with the cause of all this disturbance. How sincerely she envied those women of ruder ages who could hire bravoës to rid them of what they loathed, none but herself knew. Willingly would she have paid a heavy price to see this unutterable widow dead; but, alas, she lived in a world in which such deeds seemed impossible, and she laughed a bitter little laugh of regret and misery.

To have reconquered her Lœic, and to feel him once more slipping through her fingers, was a torture too great for her to endure. Would this coarse, common, hideous creature succeed in robbing her of him, be it but for a few weeks? Her overwrought imagination saw ahead of her, difficulties without number arising like sharp stones on an endless road, and her tortured pride of race and of motherhood writhed like some delicate creature caught in a steel trap. But she would teach him an unforgettable lesson, and that at once; for it would be she who would leave him this time, leave him publicly, with *éclat*, as if his mere presence, when returning from that woman's side, was too great a contamination. Lœic was right. No betrayed mistress could have done more.

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

The short distance to the hotel was covered with lightning-like speed, and when the panting horses stopped before its shady veranda she turned to the groom, and in accents which left no possibility of evasion she commanded: "I forbid you to go back for Monsieur le Marquis. Wait here; I'll be down directly."

Fury lent her wings. She ran up-stairs like a girl of fifteen, burst into the room where her maid sat at work on some dainty bits of lace, and cried, angrily twisting her long suède gloves into a rope, and as rapidly unwinding them: "Quick! Hurry up! put on your hat; give me mine, and a travelling-cloak; we're off this minute!" The astonished maid started to her feet, but, warned by her mistress's expression that this was no time for remonstrances or observations, hastened to comply with these orders, so startling and incomprehensible, although twenty years in her mistress's service had made her thoroughly conversant with her extraordinary whims and moods. The confidence Geneviève had in her was, after a fashion, of an intimate kind. There were, of course, certain things Madame la Marquise did not tell Nicole, but, apart from these few exceptions, she spoke very freely to this discreet woman, especially when she was in difficulties, and so, as she helped her feverishly to pack a few indispensable things in a couple of handbags, she acquainted her, in a few words, with what had just happened.

"But, Madame la Marquise," the woman ventured to say, "Monsieur Lôic will never forgive this, and also it will throw him right into that woman's arms—it surely will! Please, please do not leave him like that!"

Nicole might very possibly be right, but Geneviève's anger and resentment were still at a white heat and made reasoning an impossibility. "I don't care a rap what

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

happens next!" she exclaimed, tying a veil violently over her burning face. "Whatever he now does matters very little to me, because I am through with Lōic until he comes to beg my pardon on his knees, and I should advise you to remember, Nicole, that I'm not inclined to accept observations on this matter. We must be gone before he has time to return; that's all you've got to think of."

So completely had she lost all self-control that she began to lash out execrations not only at the widow, or even Lōic, but at many others besides who had nothing whatsoever to do with the affair. Oh, how she hated everybody! Even her vindictive dislike of Gāidik rose up in her with redoubled fury—that absurd, red-haired, pale-faced little thing who had led him at will, and had been his confidante always, while she, the mother, had no influence, no control, no voice in any of his affairs!

Vainly did the now greatly alarmed Nicole attempt to soothe these vituperations; the Marquise would listen to nothing, but talked, talked, talked, while she flung her jewels pell-mell into their travelling-case and capsized every object in the room.

In spite of this disconcerting confusion, it took the two women a surprisingly short time to get ready, so simple were the preparations, and barely half an hour after, catching her *pie au nid*, Geneviève de Kergōat was driving to the nearest railway station as fast as Lōic's cobs could put hoof to the ground, leaving a sheet of paper upon his toilet-table, on which she had scribbled in enormous characters:

"I've had enough of your treacheries and falsehoods. When you feel like begging my pardon and behaving like a gentleman you can join me at Kergōat, but not before."

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

This message, heavily underscored, was left in plain sight for any chance comer to read, which unpardonable deed called forth some more timid protestations from poor Nicole; but her exasperated mistress, having violently declared that she was not going to "mince matters," and that everybody was welcome to know what she thought of her son's conduct, she was compelled to desist, although she well knew that this last insult was not one which her young master would easily condone. Another surprise for this wretched son lay in glittering shivers and splinters on the floor of his mother's pretty salon—a charming little gilt wheelbarrow-basket filled with camellias which he had given her on the previous evening, and which she had broken, torn asunder, and trampled underfoot, simply because it reminded her of him and of the many, many happy hours they had spent there together since his return.

While all this was happening, Lōic was sitting in the little whitewashed parlor of the cottage where Madame Billot had momentarily established her Lares and Penates—consisting of a gaudy petroleum lamp, a few hideous knick-knacks, a couple of plush-covered albums, and half a dozen cushions of an awesome and terrible pattern! The view from the muslin-draped windows, it is true, was well worth looking at, for the garden had attained that fine flower and flavor that the early autumn brings with it, which same might as truthfully have been said of the fair hostess, who, almost beside herself with joy at her unexpected good-fortune, beamed from a deep, chintz-covered arm-chair upon "Monsieur le Marquis" with all the mellowing charm of her thirty-five years.

It was not wise of him, and Lōic knew it, to awaken even by so absolutely accidental a visit this wily siren's

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

hopes; but, to do him justice, it never occurred to him that he could be taken seriously, and when he had caught sight of her limping painfully on her extravagantly high heels along the hot, dusty road, he had almost instinctively pulled up and offered her the vacant seat by his side, just as he would have offered it to any aged crone encountered under similar circumstances. At least, that is what he told himself, but, under the circumstances, it is very probable that, little as he had thought of seeking this opportunity, now that it had presented itself, a truly unconscious reminiscence of his mother's bullying quickened his polite instincts. He sat laughing good-naturedly at her *minauderies* for half an hour or so, and then, getting up, made his adieux rather abruptly, for he suddenly felt an undefined dread of some impending contretemps, and the widow's silly simperings seemed all at once intolerable to him.

With a sense of relief quite disproportionate indeed to the circumstances, he bowed himself out, opened the door leading to the diminutive porch, and looked up and down the road for his trap, but instead of the perfectly appointed equipage he had expected to see, there was only a dingy sand-gatherer's cart crawling up the road behind a couple of sorry mules. Otherwise the long, straight *chaussée* was entirely empty.

Amazed and greatly annoyed, Lœic gave vent to an energetic expletive: "Where the devil can the idiot have driven to!" he continued, half aloud, a swift misgiving making his voice shake a little, and without further good-byes to Madame Billot, standing within the small hall door, he hurried away in search of his vanished trap. Quickly he took a turn around the little pine grove, although it was patent that nothing could be concealed there, glanced once more up and down the road, and,

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

realizing the uselessness of his quest, set off at a rattling pace towards the hotel.

Although he invariably retained in action all the coolness which insures success in most human pursuits, and never grew nervous or apprehensive whatever the circumstances might be, nevertheless that walk home was tense with unpleasant presentiments. Again and again he asked himself what could possibly have made an admirably trained servant like his groom disobey orders and leave him so summarily in the lurch. At last a sudden idea seized him. Could his mother have played him this very extraordinary trick? But no, that was quite impossible; for how could she have divined that he would drive the widow home? Still his horses, like the prophet Elijah's, could not have taken flight to Heaven, although he felt almost tempted to gaze skyward for some trace of them among the fleecy little clouds sailing slowly from behind the island! Then he heartily cursed himself for having accepted Geneviève's diaphanous excuse for remaining at home alone. Extraordinary as it might appear, she must be at the bottom of all this. Restless, impatient, eager for the quicker falling behind of the various landmarks punctuating his road, he hastened on; but it was, nevertheless, already very much past mid-day when he found himself at last at the top of the path leading to the hotel gardens.

As he was especially desirous—before knowing more about this strange affair—to avoid being seen by his mother thus hurrying home on foot, Loïc made a wide circuit round the building; for by crossing the gardens he could approach his favorite side entrance without being detected. A few hundred yards more brought him to the stables, where he vainly cast a passing glance of inquiry for his missing trap, and, skirting a broad

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

parterre aglow with geraniums and petunias, he pushed the creeper-wreathed door and entered, taking the narrow staircase in four bounds. Then the whole throng of suspicions and anxieties, that had seemed a minute before utterly beyond the horizon of credibility, took shape and consistence, for he stood confronted by the blank, disordered rooms and the incredible confusion caused by Geneviève's frantic departure.

The window-curtains were pulled back, and one, caught by the edge of the dressing-table, slanted into the room with something desolate in its twisted, crumpled folds. The sliding-doors of a wardrobe gaped apart, revealing a silky mass of disarranged dresses, one of them, an exquisite tea-gown of amethyst-hued *crêpe de Chine*, lying doubled up with outspread, flowing sleeves upon the floor, like a headless corpse. Chairs had been moved from their places, even the sofas had been pulled from their stations against the wall, and in one corner was the crushed and trampled little wheelbarrow. Everything cried aloud of violence and of the brutality of blind anger. Lōic gasped at the sight of so much anarchy in those charming rooms, which his mother had filled with her delicate elegance, and, turning sharply on his heel, marched into his own adjoining suite, where his eyes at once fell upon the insulting note pinned to the white velvet pin-cushion her dainty fingers had made for him but a few days ago. He pulled the sheet of paper from its restraining pin, gazed amazedly at it for a second, and then tore it four times across, his face turning almost livid with fury.

"Damnation! What ails the woman?" he cried, flinging the shredded pieces to the ground; then he burst into a laugh that would have made Geneviève shiver could she have heard it. "Well, she's done it to some purpose

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

this time!" he muttered, falling into a chair by the window. He felt suddenly battered and tired, as if he had received a blow on the head. After a few moments he took out his cigarette-case, struck a match, lit a cigarette, and began to smoke, looking unseeingly and vacantly before him, like one who rests himself after some great physical exertion; but in a very little while he rose and rang the bell, with no gentle hand, for his valet, in order to discover, if possible, what had really happened.

When he heard what the man had to tell, and also the gratifying fact that the whole hotel was in an uproar over Madame la Marquise's sensational departure, his lips curled with quiet disdain.

"That," he said, with extreme composure, "does not in the least matter, for I do not intend to give them the pleasure of my presence here long. You will please pack up all my things at once, give notice of our leaving, and send off Hortense (Geneviève's second maid) with all Madame la Marquise's trunks immediately to Kergoat. By-the-way, did any letters come this morning?"

Some had come, and, as it chanced, one among them which gave a definite turn to Lóic's immediate plans, and—could he but have known it—the worst turn his erratic plans had ever taken. It was from an old friend, who wrote to ask him whether he could not soon spare him a week or so at his bachelor hall near Les Sables d'Olonne—a very charming sea-side resort only a few miles distant, and this amiable invitation Lóic at once accepted by telegraph for the next day.

He lunched very late with but a poor appetite, and lingered rather despondently over his cigarette afterwards, which was utterly unlike him. That the present disturbance of his life should be entirely his mother's fault, that in a flare of jealousy and temper she alone

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

should have created for both of them this more than unpleasant situation, gave him no great comfort. Fortunately he was not accustomed to cry over spilled milk, but still the morning's happenings had taxed even his admirably balanced nerves; he felt singularly upset, and defiance pure and simple filled every nook and cranny of his being. At the moment he could do nothing decisive with regard to his mother, no step that he could take—save utter and abject surrender and an immediate start in pursuit, his hands full of olive-branches—could make matters a bit better between them, or disperse the thunder-clouds massed around his head, and it was therefore idle to grind one's teeth any longer over so hopeless a situation. He determined, therefore, to dismiss from his mind, for the present at least, the highly unpleasant experiences of this unfortunate day.

Having reached this more or less satisfactory conclusion, he was about to go out for a stroll when he suddenly caught sight of a bulky letter which had slipped, unobserved, from the tray upon which the morning's mail had been brought, and lay on the carpet half concealed by the table-cloth. He dreaded his long, lonely afternoon and evening, and bent eagerly for this possible source of passing diversion. Then, as he took it up, his heart gave a great jump of joy. It was from Gäidik! The very sight of her writing filled him with an immediate sense of happiness, and he went out on the balcony to read it by the rays of the setting sun, which were transforming land and sea into a pink-and-golden glory.

The letter was long, brave, and tender, like all Gäidik's letters to him, and as he read he almost seemed to hear her voice:

"How lucky you are," she wrote, "to be once more in our own Brittany. I think that exile from its shores is the greatest of

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

evils, for even with cosmopolitans like ourselves *le mal du Pays* is an incurable disease, and makes one deeply and restlessly miserable at times. It makes me feel—at least when the fit comes on—as if my whole life was like a rope cut in two; the ends may, of course, be cleverly knotted together at some future time, but even that will never make it quite the same again. I think of you day and night, my own boy. I can almost see you making the rounds of all our favorite places, and I know that you miss your little sister, especially when you gallop your horses along the dear old cliffs. They call Brittany dull and dark and silent. What nonsense that is! Brittany, like its wild seas, deals open blows, not the cruel, insinuatingly treacherous ones other lands are apt to fell one with. But what is the use of all this, excepting to make you think that I have lost all my pluck, which is, thank Heaven, far from being the case as yet, although here the prospect is not what you might truthfully call cheerful. Rain is pouring down from extraordinarily leaden skies, and all the world is dim and watery and full of gloom. To-night, if it only will storm in good earnest, instead of eternally drizzling, when I am comfortably tucked in my bed I will indulge in my greatest of luxuries—imagining that I am at Kergoat, and that the voices of the winds bring me the dear sound of yours. It is at such times that I best recognize the possibility of mysterious messages being sent by one soul to another through endless space. One is hardly aware that one possesses this power until the cruelties of life make one acquainted with it, and it is a great comfort to find out that the mind can then develop such amazing and unexpected aptitudes. How delighted Mamma must be to have you again with her! Be good and patient, Lōic. She is sometimes a little difficult to understand, and after your years of utter liberty it will probably seem hard to you to bend to her whims, but remember how much she loves you, and also how lonely she has been since we both left her—”

At that point Lōic put down the letter on the small rattan table where his mother's fan and scent-bottle lay forgotten by her, and leaned back in his lounging-chair, his mouth rigid and his deep-set eyes wandering vacantly athwart the beautiful sunset tints of sea and sky. He was not fond of apologizing to anybody for anything; but his sister's letter was working a remarkable trans-

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

formation in his feelings; indeed, wounded pride and bitter resentment were yielding to a softer mood, and he suddenly felt an overwhelming yearning for the immediate presence of Gäidik. Why was she not here to smooth the way for him? Ah, yes! why? He sighed impatiently as he thought that, after all, during the last few weeks the business of living had been a very cheery, comfortable affair, and now suddenly, without any real fault of his own, he was again out of his depth, and he clearly saw tempestuous clouds gathering above his horizon with a promise of many a grim storm in the immediate future. And after that, what? Why had his mother acted so foolishly? Well, she always acted foolishly where he was concerned, so it seemed to him—all women acted foolishly, excepting Gäidik; but Gäidik was a trump; she was always cheery and simple and splendid; she never had a look or a word of reproach for him whatever his sins of omission and commission. Gäidik was Gäidik, and it was useless to judge others by her—to that he must make up his mind!

At last he got up and walked to the end of the balcony, where he leaned for a moment far into the warm, velvety evening air; then he slowly returned to his chair. Gäidik's letter was indeed doing its work; her straightforward words were persistently groping about in his heart. Forget what had happened, humiliate himself for a fault so slender that it hardly deserved the name? His very soul revolted against such a step. Moreover, if he yielded now, what endless patience he would need to endure his mother's triumph, and how impossible it would be for him to ever assert himself again or call his life his own. Nevertheless, he suddenly jumped up once more, strode across the room to a writing-table and rapidly penned the following words:

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

"MY DEAR MOTHER,—I think that you would be sorry if you knew how unjust are your accusations and how unnecessary the fuss you are making. I am, however, not going to speak about this unpleasant affair. I am writing only to ask you whether you want me at Kergoat. Pray answer yes or no, and address me at Ghislain d'Yffiniac's, Château d'Yffiniac, Les Sables d'Olonne, where I will be staying from to-morrow on for a week.

"Lôic.

"P.S.—Isn't it a pity that you can't try to trust me a little more!"

"There!" he said, half aloud, throwing down his pen with a smile of relief. "If Gäid is not satisfied, she's become devilishly hard to please. I'm no letter-writer, but I think this should fetch Madame la Marquise, if she's the least clever at reading between the lines." Yet, as he pushed away his writing materials, he still puzzled over his mother's strange fugue, for he recollected, somewhat bitterly, that far from being always so strict with regard to his flirtations, she had, before his departure for the States, several times countenanced some rather peculiar incidents in his *carrière galante*—nay, had deliberately closed her eyes to situations far, far more compromising and serious than this mere fortuitous encounter with Madame Billot, in order to keep him at her side; he being then only a mere boy, whereas now he was of age, independent, and could reasonably be supposed to have learned how to take care of himself. Well, she was incomprehensible as always, and her caprices would ever remain unfathomable to her sorely tried and much bewildered son.

When he had sent his orders to the stables concerning what was to be done with the horses and men brought from Kergoat, it was time for him to dress for his solitary dinner, and as he did so he had so far recovered his temper that he spoke quite cheerfully and banteringly of

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

his *déconvenue* to his faithful valet. Geneviève always took the precaution of carrying special wines with her when she was at hotels, and Lôic ordered up some remarkable Burgundy, of which he drank several glasses, which helped to further brighten his mood; then, lighting a cigarette, he strolled down-stairs to the café, a singularly cosy apartment decorated in pale yellow and white, provided with small tables, lighted by daintily shaded lamps, and opened generously onto the outer world by an immense bow-window, through which the smell of wet sea-weed and reseda and the intermittent orange gleam of a revolving light from one of the islands came floating in.

As he came in, the few occupants of this very unconventional public room looked curiously up at him, and then covertly at one another; but, taking no apparent notice of this, he picked up a morning paper and, sitting down in a nook between the bow-window and the yellow silk portières partially separating it from the café proper, ordered a cup of coffee and began to glance at the news.

Presently he heard one elderly gentleman say to another elderly gentleman with whom he was playing dominoes, in that hoarsely audible whisper that testifies to a dulled ear, "That is the young Marquis de Kergôat, about whom there was such a pow-wow this morning."

"Ah! I thought so," replied old gentleman No. 2. "Re-mar-ka-bly handsome, I call him, and a regular dare-devil, is he not?"

"That he is; and such a fortune—millions, my dear Sir; millions! Not to speak of his Lady mother's hoards. *Hé, hé! la p'tite Mère Billot aura de quoi croquer*; and, I'm told, she's got sharp teeth, that little woman—but it's your play," and he courteously waved his hand towards the game.

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

"So," thought Lōic, "Mamma's startling manœuvres are preparing a Kergoat-Billot scandal in these charitable regions! Thanks, awfully; but I'd best clear out of this, or there's going to be a curtain-raiser right away in the shape of an old-gentleman-Lōic row," and, rising, he sauntered out of the hotel and down towards the sea.

The water was a good way off, and the tide still falling. Long lines of surf chased one another before the cool night-wind, faded into shallow, moonlit ripples, and were replaced by other eager, harmonious little waves ready to be shredded into opalescent foam. Lōic walked on and on along the lonely sands, listening to the music of the sea with the profound sympathy of a true Breton. So far as eye could reach on all sides save one, there was nothing but sand-hills and pale grasses thrown into metallic relief by the moon. Once or twice he stopped to look affectionately at some bits of sea-weed spread out at his feet, every little fibre showing separately and quite distinct against the smooth, wet beach, where each of his steps crushed for a moment the moisture out of the sand in a little, shining circlet. He was longing for Kergoat and ah!—so bitterly for Gäidik again! He shrugged his shoulders impatiently, and began to sing in his ringing, deep-chested voice a bit of an old, old Breton ballad about a lad whose wicked mistress, to prove her power, demanded his mother's heart, and how he killed his mother, but found by a miracle that he could not kill her love:

“Comme il courait il tomba
Et lon, lon laire,
Et lon, lon la—
Comme il courait il tomba
Et par terre l'cœur roula.

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

"Et pendant que l'cœur roulait,
Et lon, lon laire,
Et lon, lon la,
Et pendant que l'cœur roulait,
Entendit l'cœur qui parlait.

"Et le cœur disait en pleurant,
Et lon, lon laire,
Et lon, lon la—
Et le cœur disait en pleurant,
T'es-tu fait mal, mon enfant!"

"That's the sort of mother for a chap to have," he commented, with a queer little laugh, after he had concluded this touching chansonette with a wild and defiant Tyrolese yodel, "for surely maternal solicitude and forbearance can go no further!"

It was getting late; the brilliant moon was now barred across by fleecy clouds; moment by moment its clear radiance was paling over land and sea, and there was a chill in the air which seemed to go straight down to his innermost heart. He heaved a deep sigh of weariness, both mental and physical, and turned to retrace his way. When he reached the hotel, its rosily shining window-squares looked inviting and homelike, but this was not his home—worse luck—and, although he did not know it, many days were to pass before he saw that again, and as he slowly ascended the stairs he once more began to hum.

"Et l'cœur disait en pleurant,
Et lon, lon laire,
Et lon, lon la—
Et l'cœur disait en pleurant,
T'es-tu fait mal, mon enfant!"

XIV

Saith the pendulum
Slowly o'er and o'er,
"Nevermore!
Shut and barred the door!"
Will the dawn ne'er come,
Or be dumb
These dull Voices' lore?
"Nevermore!"

The Clock, III.—M. M.

Lôrc drew up his horses before the castle gateway, where their impatient hoofs immediately began to beat a sonorous devil's tattoo as the groom, dropping smartly down from his high perch, pulled at the dazzling brass handle of the concière's bell.

Meanwhile his master was taking in the very inviting aspect of the exquisite little Vendeén castle, intrenched behind the tall, hammered-iron gates which, during the Reign of Terror, had formed so excellent a defence for the hasty barricade of desperate Chouans. The *tout-ensemble* had a pretty, coquettish air of belonging to an era that had altogether passed away, to a yesterday already far remote, which yet did not exclude all that modern ideas of comfort and luxury could suggest. The château itself, irregularly picturesque, with its round turrets much carved and fretted and deliciously overgrown in lustrous patches by broad-leaved creepers, its fancifully wrought balconies, its pointed chapel-spire to the left profiling a gilded cross against the intensely blue sky, slept in the shadowy stillness of broad-terraced gardens,

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

merging soon into the rolling green waves of a beautiful park.

"Ghislain is not to be pitied," Lōic muttered, "for that's really an uncommonly nice place," and at that precise minute Ghislain himself came running down the flower-bordered avenue, preceded by his breathless concière, who was evidently greatly distressed by not having been at his post to receive the puissant Lord of Kergoat.

"A million times welcome!" the young chatelain cried, jumping up beside his smiling guest and shaking him warmly by the hand. "Give those beauties their heads, and we'll be home in three seconds. You can't imagine how glad I am to see you."

Count Ghislain d'Yffiniac seemed the very embodiment of unconquerable good-humor, a fact which made his round face handsome from its very pleasantness of expression. His light-brown hair stood up with an energy upon which no brush, be it ever so wiry, could ever exercise a flattening influence, and he had merry, hazel eyes, soft and honest and loyal, like those of a dog. He was about five feet eleven, and broad for that, and wore his clothes in a comfortable sort of a way, excluding all idea of dandyism. Having lost both his parents when still very young, he was in possession of a very large fortune, and, being one of those who go smiling through the world, he was continuously smiled upon in return. It was blankly impossible to quarrel with him—it would have been quite useless to try—his very smile displaying a double row of admirable teeth alone forbade such a thought. Passionately devoted to horses, he spent the greater portion of his large revenues on a model stud-farm that was the pride of his heart and which was only separated from this exquisite little château by the length of its well-timbered park.

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

The dining-room at Yffiniac was a delightful apartment, and from the moment of sitting down to a remarkably well-cooked dinner beneath its fine, coffered ceiling a soul-cheering merriness had reigned supreme between the two friends, rising sometimes into loud hilarity as anecdote followed anecdote and reminiscence succeeded to reminiscence. They were now at dessert; decanters glowed on the snowy cloth like gigantic rubies and topazes; a silver tray heaped with cigars and cigarettes stood at Ghislain's elbow beside his coffee-cup; and now their talk settled down into a more definite channel.

"It was really good of you to come, Lōic," the young host said, stroking his imperceptible mustache, "because I was feeling a bit lonely just now, to tell you the truth, in my barrack of a house."

Lōic laughed. "Barrack is good! Why, you fortunate mortal, your lot is the most enviable in the world. What are you complaining of, pray?"

"It's all very well for you to say so," he replied, making a wry face. "You, who have a lovely mother, an ideal sister, and the usual complement of uncles, aunts, and cousins, cannot judge what it is to be all alone in the world without kith and kin. I assure you it is sometimes a little trying."

Lōic's face expressed nothing whatever; he drew the silver tray to his side of the table and lit a cigarette. Perchance he was thinking of the family blessings he had lately enjoyed.

"Yes," the other continued, ruefully, "one can't spend all one's lazy, selfish life in amusing one's self."

"What about the horses—aren't they sufficiently absorbing?" asked Lōic. "I thought they obliged you to work late and early—that, at least, being what you were so good as to write me no later than yesterday."

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

"That's just a little slow of you to think that horses can entirely fill up the void of one's soul," Ghislain replied, with such energy that Lóic burst into a peal of laughter. "You have a void in your soul?" he cried. "Look here, Ghis, if you are playing the fool are you prepared to take the consequences?—because I've not come here to listen to the laments of the lonely bachelor. Go and get married at once, if that's the way you feel."

Ghislain fell immediately into his humor. "What advice!" he said, shaking his round head. "That's like recommending the use of the guillotine to a man suffering from a toothache. Besides, how many women do you think are yearning to bestow their hands upon such an ugly chap as I? I don't pretend to be an Adonis, like you, my boy."

"Is that a compliment?" Lóic said, derisively, making an obeisance. "Considering your low opinion of yourself, I'm a good deal surprised to see you looking so fat and hearty. Humility can't be very wearing, or else it is your particular forte."

"Now, that's both unkind and cynical," Ghislain protested, with immense plaintiveness. "My intentions were honorable—to confide my troubles to you and show by a 'deadly parallel' how lucky you are; but, of course, those good intentions have only gone to join the other paving-stones."

"You are a—but for charity's sake I'd best forbear to specify. Still, you are getting me interested; so, in Heaven's name, tell me what is really the trouble with you?"

"Oh, it would be too long and too sad a story; if I were to anatomize my feelings, it would take half the night, and I hate anatomizing my feelings! I have

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

pretty nearly every weakness that flesh is heir to, but—psychology is not among them.”

“My good man, psychology or no psychology, you won’t make me believe in your claims to pity. I diagnose your case perfectly; cheap sarcasm, tale of woe, mysterious circumlocutions, all point one way. Own up, you are on the dangerous slope—*facilis descensus*, you know—which leads to matrimony. Is there any reason, by-the-way, why you shouldn’t marry?”

“None whatsoever, as far as I know,” Ghislain said, dropping his tone of futile banter. “Don’t laugh, but if I ever marry it will be simply because I adore children. I’ve an uncle—my one living relative—whose great idea is to see me ‘established,’ as he calls it. He looks upon me as a sort of family fund that has to be speedily sunk somewhere; and, well, one of these days he’ll succeed in his nefarious purpose, and then you’ll have to sheer off, for I’ll transform “Bachelor Hall” into a vast nursery.”

“I won’t sheer off,” said Lœic, with extreme deliberation, “not the least bit, because I’ve a weakness for babies myself, strange as it may appear; so I’ll come here in the character of devoted uncle, and play that disinterested part with a generosity and self-forgetfulness which will positively take your breath away.” He had spoken with a sort of inconsequent seriousness, as if he had not yet decided whether he was dealing with a matter of deadly earnest or of rattling farce, and now he broke off and looked at Ghislain with his slow, somewhat mocking smile, awaiting the result of his little speech. Ghislain, with a burst of laughter, pushed a decanter towards his guest. “You’re a likely chap for the rôle—you the Don Juan *par excellence*!”

“You should never judge by appearances,” Lœic remonstrated; but Ghislain, pursing up his lips and looking

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

Lôic's handsome figure up and down with genuine appreciation, said, in an equally solemn and impressive tone: "There is somebody not far from here who is terribly in earnest about marrying you, at any rate. A young widow, beautiful, charming, with a skin like a camellia, eyes—"

"A widow!" Lôic interrupted, his eyebrows going up in his astonishment almost to the roots of his hair. "What widow? Who the devil do you mean?"

Ghislain looked at him with a sort of wonder, and then laughed quietly. "How many widows are at present filling the bill?" he inquired. "Your irritability indicates a guilty conscience."

"There you are at it again, misjudging the innocent! Hadn't you better be careful?" Lôic rejoined, pulling himself together. "But tell me, of your mercy, who is the lady in question?"

"No, not now; I don't want to spoil your surprise—for you'll see her to-morrow."

"To-morrow!" Lôic gasped. "Here?"

"Well, I can flatter myself that my wee bit of news makes its little effect," Ghislain remarked, delighted. "I'd no idea you were so keen on widows. But calm yourself; she won't grace my humble dwelling by her presence—no such luck. We will be granted the privilege of admiring her manifold charms at *Les Sables*. The *Concours* begins there to-morrow, and I'll have the honor of presenting eight of my horses, including my champion *Fier-à-bras*, raised four."

"The *Concours* begins to-morrow? What luck!" Lôic cried, absolutely forgetting for the minute the very existence of widows in general or particular. "Are you serious?"

"As serious as serious can be. From to-morrow

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

morning on G. d'Yffiniac, trainer and breeder, will be all day long at the above address, and trusts, by a careful attention to business, to merit a continuance of the Nobility's and gentry's kind patronage. Don't you see, you donkey, it was one of my reasons for being so anxious to get you here! I want to obtain your valuable services."

"Oh, Lord! why didn't you say so at once? Fancy keeping such a revelation for the fag-end-of the evening!"

Ghislain drew in his legs and leaned forward to light a fresh cigarette.

"Then you really don't mind riding three or four horses in the ring?" he asked, joyful anticipation beaming all over his merry face.

"Mind! Who do you take me for? I'll like nothing better; but, now, tell me all about the horses, for I feel doubly interested in them now, of course."

Ghislain gave a grunt of pleasure. "My pale-faced brother has spoken well; he expresses my desires," he said, with deliberate expansiveness; "but suppose we go now and give them a look. We've an hour yet of this silvery gloaming before us, and we can find our way to the stables as easily as at high noon."

It was a crisp, fragrant evening outside, with a crescent moon of alabaster whiteness rollicking on its back above the park trees in a sort of drunken, lazy way amid the slowly darkening azure of the sky.

Lôic and Ghislain crossed the lawn, chatting, on their way to the stables, where the horses were even then at their nightly toilets, just like fine ladies in the hands of careful attendants on the eve of a great social event. Only their dressing-rooms were loose boxes, carpeted with freshly shaken straw, and their attire very handsome green-and-white rugs and quarter-pieces buckled

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

upon their sleek flanks and marked G. Y. in monogram, surmounted by a Count's coronet.

They all shook themselves and stood *at attention*, every fibre strung to pleasurable excitement, as the steps of their much-loved master sounded on the pavement of their luxurious dwelling, and were quite willing to have their blankets turned back and their satiny coats admired.

Cœur de Roi, who had arrived but an hour before, was lodged side by side with the celebrated *Fier-à-bras*, and turned his infinitely caressing eyes on Lôic as the well-known hand held out some sugar, and the voice he loved best said, with the fond tone a man uses to a much-cherished woman, "Ah, you dear old boy; so you're here, too!"

"He's in first-rate form. Why don't you present him?" Ghislain asked, almost imploringly.

"Isn't it too late to enter his name?" inquired Lôic, eagerly.

"Not at all," his host replied. "Not at all. My uncle is Vice-President of the concern, if you please, and so I can do as I jolly well like. Do let me send a man early to-morrow morning with *Cœur de Roi's* name and pedigree, there's a good fellow."

"By all means; and as to his pedigree, I flatter myself that it leaves nothing to be desired. He is out of *Fairy Princess* by *Sea-King*, and, furthermore, stretches up to his long line of ancestry by *Black Devil* out of *Eglantine*, by *Démoniac* out of *Morning-Star*, by *Chouan First* out of *Frondeuse*, and straight up to *Imperator*, one of the greatest steeplechasers ever sent over the course, as you know. What d' you say to that? Besides, he's clever enough for anything, is trained to close and open country, and is a perfect water-jumper and fencer."

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

Ghislain fairly gasped with joy. "What a pair he and *Fier-à-bras* will make!" he exclaimed. "They'll open the eyes of *Messieurs les juges*; but by the setting of *Cœur de Roi's* neck I should imagine that he takes a deal of riding?"

"He does! That's the pleasure of it. And yet he's as docile as a lamb with me, and goes over the tallest yawners like a bird." Just then *Cœur de Roi*, as if he understood what was being said of him, suddenly caught the manger between his teeth and kicked out in a playful way, which sent both young men into roars of laughter. After which they continued their tour, and finally sauntered out of the stables surrounded by a small mob gravely introduced to Lœic as "my house pets"—half a dozen bull-terriers, two fierce bull-dogs, a couple of formidable mastiffs, and a magnificent Great Dane, all jumping around them in frantic delight, while in the distance, from beyond a thick barrier of firs and pines, the hounds loudly gave tongue in their kennels, having been awakened by the sounds of steps and the joyful barks of their master's more privileged canines.

There was a laugh in Lœic's eyes as he listened, then something more earnest came over his face, and, pausing to light a cigarette, he abruptly asked his friend: "By-the-way, Ghis, who is that widow you were trying to guy me about?"

"Ah, ha! so you're nibbling at the bait, Messire, and, my faith, there's reason for it! That widow-woman looks like a white camellia, I tell you; her hair is dark as night, her eyes of deepest sapphire, her shape marvellous, besides which she's dashing in her style, a bit of a coquette, and intensely thorough-bred to boot, if you insist on knowing, Madame la Vicomtesse Gynette de Morières."

"Whew-ew!" whistled Lœic, facing round; "the



LA VICOMTESSE GYNETTE DE MORIÈRES



THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

beauteous Vicomtesse Gynette! Tell me, does she still wear her *bandeaux à la vierge* and sport sixteenth-century tea-gowns?"

"She certainly wears her hair in *bandeaux* still; but you shouldn't laugh at her on that account, since she imitates your mother, whom she adores, in *coiffant* herself thus. Imitation, you know, is the sincerest, etc. Moreover, she is a gem, is Gynette, pure as a pearl and plucky and thorough and honest."

"Why don't you marry her yourself, if that's your opinion of her?" Lōic said, laughing; "but never mind, you gave me just now a famous fright, for I thought at one moment—but that's neither here nor there. Tell me why the Lady Gynette has, according to you, set her ravishing little widow's cap at me?"

"Because she's long been in love with you," Ghislain answered, bluntly; "and since she considers her fan a sceptre, and her faintest smile an honor rarely to be bestowed upon any one of her covey of admirers, you should really feel damned proud of having conquered that Queen of the Lists."

Lōic shrugged his shoulders and laughed again with a sensation of intense relief, since at the word "widow," pronounced by his friend over the coffee and cigarettes, he had felt a ridiculous and quite senseless dread of seeing the gaudy relict of Captain Billot suddenly cross his path once more. The pleasurable disappointment gave just the touch needed to restore his normal tone, and no shadow lay behind his gayety as the two young men strolled through the fragrant dusk towards the château.

It is a solemn truth that on the turf all men are equal, and this truth was singularly exemplified in the appearance presented by the little sea-side resort of *Les Sables d'Olonne* when the drag driven by Ghislain d'Yffiniac

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

rattled up its main avenue next morning, for it was, indeed, a motley crowd which was wending its way towards the spot where the great horse-show was to take place. It was to be the meeting-ground of many classes, though naturally the Patrician factions of Vendée and Brittany were by far the most prominent. All the *châtelains* and *châtelaines* of the environs were driving in from every side, mostly in four-in-hands, some of them even in *d'Aumonts*, with brilliantly jacketed postilions, their dazzling equipages hemmed in by the humbler dog-carts or cabriolets of gentlemen-farmers and the carryalls of tradesmen and their families bent on making a day of it. The whole place of exhibit was thronged with peasants, too, who had gathered from far and near, many of whom would not return to their villages until the *Concours* was over, but would drink and dance and wrestle day and night during the intervals of the show, as is the custom for Vendéen and Breton peasants to do on such occasions.

A delicious salt breeze swept in from the sea to cool the hot heads of those who had walked a long way, and the enclosure around the Jockey-Club pavilion presented a most animated spectacle. The stewards were already in their places, and many agents from great commission stables walked nervously up and down in this fraternity of sports and manhood, shoulder to shoulder with half the titled personages of France and a multitude of cavalry officers belonging to the crack regiments that had sent their best riders to try for the much-coveted gold medal (*de 1^{re} classe*) and knot of royal-blue ribbon which it is the ambition of every horse-owner to obtain at least once in his life.

The clock of the club pavilion pointed to half-past twelve when Loïc and Ghislain crossed the ring before

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

the clanging of the saddling-bell, and glanced up at the circle of boxes and the rows upon rows of crowded seats rising above the select "horseshoe."

Everybody there knew the two young men by name and sight at least; the Vendéens and Bretons present knew them more intimately yet, and that from their earliest childhood, and eager glances followed their tall forms as they moved through the press, nodding to their peers or bowing to the bevy of lovely Aristocrats in the boxes. Indeed, low whispers followed them just as if they were themselves exhibits, for it had become known that they were to present the two finest steeplechasers on the list—*Cœur de Roi* and *Fier-à-bras*!

"Look at Lœic de Kergoat; rides no end, you know. He's just back from the plains of America."—"Ghislain d'Yffiniac seems in good form—already a trifle too heavy, though." "Is the Marquise here, too?" "No, gone back to Brittany." "Pity Gäidik is away; she'd enjoy this"—with other innumerable phrases of real affection and sympathy.

A woman, conspicuously clad, with a superabundance of showy flounces and bad jewelry, eyed them curiously, and turned all the way round in her second-row seat so as to face Lœic as the latter walked with Ghislain to the stable entrance. Glancing up at the same moment, the young Marquis saw her and the girl sitting at her side, and received a most exaggerated and affectionate bow. His eyebrows contracted, and his face darkened for a second, though it resumed, almost immediately, its habitual serenity; and, slightly raising his hat, he strode away after his friend with his long, lounging horseman's swing.

"Confound the woman!" he was saying, under his breath, and then he had just time enough to get angry

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

at himself for such disproportionate annoyance—"for surely," he thought, "it will be a simple matter to avoid her"—before his attention was distracted by a very different greeting from a central box where sat the Vicomtesse de Morières. "Ghislain's widow" was a lovely woman, not yet quite twenty-four, wearing a snowy gown of silk cloth and embroidery all a-shimmer with tiny little silver Breton *fleur-de-lisé* buttons. A broad-brimmed Chouan hat of white felt shaded her splendid, dark-blue eyes, and the glossy black *bandeaux* imitated from Geneviève de Kergoat—who despised fringes, artificial undulations, or any other torturings of feminine tresses—and a delicate perfume of jessamine came and went in the air around her as she slowly waved to and fro her big fan of eagle's feathers. Not very tall, but with an exquisitely modelled figure, typically tiny hands and feet, and a thoroughly high-bred, enthusiastic Vendéen temperament, Gynette de Morières was, indeed, a remarkably attractive, whimsical, delightful little woman, changeable in her moods, like the skies of her beautiful sea-coast province, and, like it, fascinating always.

During that whole afternoon she sat breathless and radiant, displaying an eager interest in the performances of the presented horses, as became a great lady who had first flight over the famed Vendéen autumnal *chasses*, and herself owned a stableful of magnificent hunters, but when finally the highest prize that could be given was awarded to Lœic and his beloved *Cœur de Roi*, and the air was rent with applause, this dainty sportswoman was so far carried away that she actually smashed her fan against her little, white-gloved hand, and flushed a rich rose red when the victor, with a slight bend of the head and a rapid glance, dedicated his laurels to her.

As he threw himself lightly out of the saddle, and

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

Cœur de Roi was led away for the after-ceremony of rubbing, bottling, and clothing, he turned to Ghislain and held out his hand.

"I'm sorry, old boy, ever so sorry, that *Fier-à-bras* should have been beaten, and that by my horse," he said, in his simple, winning way.

The honest, round face of the young *Eleveur* broke into a bright, cordial smile, although the defeat of his horse had cut him for a moment to the heart.

"My dear lad," he replied, without a shadow of bitterness, "it is very little humiliation to lose against such riding as yours and such a superb animal as *Cœur de Roi*: Pray believe that I would not have had it otherwise—*à tout, Seigneur, tout honneur!*"

And he meant it, too, for Ghislain d'Yffiniac was not the man to cast vindictive blame on any one unless it were himself, or grudge a rival so well-earned a victory.

Nevertheless, Lōic felt the joy of the moment dimmed by the defeat of his friend, and the brightness of his eyes was clouded as he strolled backward and forward on the broad strip of turf behind the race-course while waiting for him to finish some business with his uncle. The gay toilettes of the women a few yards away, their flower-wreathed hats and multicolored parasols, produced the effect of a parterre of gigantic blossoms undulating gracefully to the accompaniment of the lively music played by a military band installed beneath a thatched *champignon*; the fresh sea-breezes were shot with delicate scents of roses and cigarette-smoke, the deep-blue sea sparkled gloriously beneath the slanting rays of the setting sun, and yet all this conglomeration of pleasing circumstances did not conjure the frown from his brow. It was just at this precise instant that fate chose to bring home to him the memory of another conquest, for, turning

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

suddenly, at the end of his beat he found himself face to face with the Billot women!

"Oh, Monsieur le Marquis!" quoth she, smirking and smiling rapturously, "may I be permitted to offer my humble congratulations," and then added, indicating the blushing girl at her side, before he could recover from his surprise and annoyance, "This is my little daughter, Monsieur le Marquis, who also has been enthusiastically applauding your prowess all the afternoon."

Lôic bowed silently, without any perceptible excess of cordiality, but Madame was too experienced a hand to allow herself to be influenced by his attitude, and smothered the angles of the situation in a gush of fluent audacities, so that, what with her impudence and her amorous *arillades*, her opponent was so far disarmed that he found himself desperately endeavoring not to laugh.

When Ghislain, breathless and fearful to have shown discourtesy to his friend by keeping him waiting so long, rushed upon the scene after his usual harum-scarum fashion, he was brought up standing at a few steps distant by these words:

"I owe you, Monsieur le Marquis, the two proudest days of my life. The first when you rescued me so magnificently from deadly peril, and now when I can remember forevermore that I had the honor of congratulating you upon your great victory, and making my courtesy to you before all the world," with which grand peroration she did at last courtesy herself away, followed by her mute and still blushing "little daughter."

"How in thunder do you come to know Aline Billot?" Ghislain asked, facing round to gaze after them with puzzled, laughing eyes. "Wherever did you meet '*la p'tite providence des sous-lieutenants*'?"

"What! is she a *cocotte*?" Lôic exclaimed, astounded.

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

"Oh, not by any manner of means! A very bourgeois little *demi-castor* at the most. An orderly, level-headed little woman who reckons with her vices and keeps them within proper bounds, and who never accepts anything more valuable than bonbons, gloves, or cheap bits of jewelry, interlarded with an occasional box at the theatre or a *déjeuner* at the restaurant. She likes uniforms, though—preferably cavalry uniforms worn by very young men—hence the nickname. How in the world did you get acquainted with her?"

"Chanced to meet her a few days ago down the coast. But, tell me, are you sure of what you say; and what about this daughter of hers? Is she following in her fair Mamma's footsteps?"

"The daughter?" Ghislain echoed; "well, there have been stories about her, too; but I don't know; she's pretty young, and not very happy, I fancy, because *Madame sa Mère* uses her mostly as a chaperone and a foil; but still, of course, I would not speak of her in that tone, you may believe me, if she was not more or less in Queer Street, too. There's another little girl, a child of fourteen, who is a beauty and already a sad flirt. She'll be the joy of the twentieth century. Poor Rose—that's the elder one's name, as you may know—is silly and rather down-trodden. A curious family, taking it all in all, a singular *ménage* well worth studying. They live at La-Roche-Sur-Yon with a hair-dresser brother, a scamp who knows all about the little ways of his womankind, and smiles encouragingly, since their presence behind his counters brings many customers there and much grist to his mill."

"You seem well informed," Loïc remarked, dryly.

"I am. You see, a friend of mine—and of yours, too, for the matter of that—Jean de Tréguidy, was on the best of terms with this estimable widow last year while garri-

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

soned at La Roche, where, by-the-way, my uncle spends most of the year in his exquisite old *Hôtel* behind the gardens of the Préfecture. You'll see what a charming house that is, for he asked me just now to be sure and bring you to stay a few days with him. It's a piece of pure mediævalism, let me tell you. The Duchess de Berri took refuge there during several weeks, and lived in three secret rooms behind the wainscoting of the great hall—the place is honeycombed with secret rooms and passages leading right and left into darkness, secret staircases, sliding panels, etc., queerer yet than the one I showed you at Yffiniac last night."

"I'd love to see them; we, too, have some few little things of that kind at Kergöat," Løic said, enthusiastically, the eternal child waking up in him; "but," he added, a note of humor appearing in his voice, "is Jean de Tréguidy still garrisoned at La Roche? I've lost sight of all my old friends, of course, during my stay in America."

"No. That's just the point. He was transferred to Versailles a couple of months ago, much to the widow's despair. She's no doubt anxious to replace her cuirassier lover by another Breton Noble, which explains her languishing eyes. You should be flattered, though, since she's ready to chuck the army for your sake. It will be the first time that she has deigned to glance at a *Pékin*."

"Don't be a fool, Ghisl!" Løic cried, with pungency. "I'll probably be obliged to go away day after to-morrow, anyhow. The Mater's alone at Kergöat."

"You can't leave me until the end of the *Concours*, at any rate, and that 'll last three days longer, after which we are booked for La Roche. So you see that your fate is sealed, and that Madame de Kergöat must needs wait in solitary grandeur a little while longer. But let's hurry.

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

or else you'll be late for Gynette's dinner-party. Curious, now, that fair ladies don't rush to celebrate *my* victories with wine and wassail!"

Of a truth, Madame de Kergoat was just then, if he had but known it, insuring "solitary grandeur" to herself; for, to his boundless indignation and astonishment, Lōic found, on returning to Yffiniac late that night, a broad, crested envelope addressed in her clear, bold hand, and containing nothing save his own letter torn across and across with a thoroughness that allowed no doubt as to the sincerity of the perpetrator's intentions.

"Oh ho!" Lōic commented, as the pieces fluttered to his feet. "So that's the way you take my attempted apologies, my dear Mother! Well, then, you'll have to wait a long time before I send some fresh ones!" and, with a heavy frown on his handsome face, he strode away to find his friend in the smoking-room.

"I'll go with you to La-Roche-Sur-Yon when the *Concours* is over," he said, sharply, far more as if delivering an ultimatum than as if accepting an invitation; but Ghislain was much too delighted to notice either the frown or the tone, and began at once to build interminable and complicated plans for his friend's amusement. Trusting eventually to persuade Lōic to remain for some time at Yffiniac, he had already held long sessions in his mind as to whether he should not ask other men down to meet him. It was but slim hospitality, he thought, to provide for his entertainment nobody but himself, his dogs, and his horses; but this visit to La Roche arranged everything, more especially as the Vicomtesse Gynette lived there too, her sumptuous gardens touching those of his uncle.

"He'll not lack amusement," he thought, joyfully, remembering how well those two had pulled together

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

that very evening during the Vicomtesse's charming little dinner; and, aloud, he added: "You see that you are destined to fall into Gynette's nets, and to become better acquainted with the firm of Billot & Co." As, alas, he was!

La-Roche-Sur-Yon, or Napoléon-Vendée, is, as the guide-books poetically put it, "a town founded by Napoleon in the centre of the rebellious province of La Vendée, and is united with La-Roche-Sur-Yon, an ancient appanage of the Bourbons, which now forms a suburb to the larger and more modern town. Population, 8841."

What the guide-books, however, neglect to state is that this little town is deliciously situated amid verdant woods, and that almost all its houses, whether modern or ancient, are planted in the midst of beautiful gardens to which the mildness of the climate lends a surpassing richness of foliage and bloom. Camellias are used as hedges in the *Jardin de la Préfecture*, and fuchsias six feet in height are not a rarity within the sheltering walls of the great parks wherein are hidden the *Hôtels* belonging to the old Nobility.

One of the handsomest of these was owned by the bachelor Marquis d'Yffiniac, who regarded with very tender feelings its long stone terraces, leading down into what were called *les vieux jardins*, its many-mullioned, deep-embraused windows, its tall and picturesque slate roofs. It was one of those corners of ancient France which keep unspoiled the memories of days long departed, and are undisturbed by all the changes and clamor of to-day. Its historical associations also appealed to the old Nobleman, and he liked to think that Ghislain's children would be there after him. Little bits of his heart were twined round every corner of this splendid cradle of his child-

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

hood, his very blood seemed to glow in the tinted light of its gorgeously painted casements; and when at night the massive bolts and complicated steel locks of its arched portals were fastened by his old servants, and he heard the owls hoot and the winds whisper in the thick-leaved trees that fingered the window-panes with the touch of kinship and ancient association, he loved to imagine that no such thing existed as republican France, and that all the horrors of recent years were a mere nightmare and no grim reality.

A type this old Marquis—very similar to that of Lœic's childhood friend, the impoverished Marquis de Kerdougaszt, only with millions at his command and a high position among the true Royalists, the *fine fleur* of the Legitimists—not the Orleanists, whom he would not even recognize as in the least Royal, despite the overweening presumption which, since the death of the Comte de Chambord (Henry V., Monsieur d'Yffiniac, of course, called him), made them style themselves "*the*" Bourbon, and aspire to the Throne. Oh, with what ineffable disgust the Grand Seigneur would turn his silvered head away when these upstarts were mentioned in his presence!

When Ghislain and Lœic, on the last day of the *Concours*, drove up to the vermiculated and delicately carved *perron*, the ruddy glow of the setting sun illumined the exquisite building and gilded the Banksian and tea roses climbing all over it where the ivy, centuries their senior, left them any space. This was, indeed, a place to be proud of; despite its great stateliness, a home that all one's heart went out to in warm reverence, a home inherited as such, which time and tradition had most sweetly consecrated, not a mere shell purchased for more or less gold and haunted by the spirits of many unknowns.

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

"I love my Vendée," the old Marquis was wont to say. "It is not as grand or picturesque or superb in outline as Brittany, but among its shadowy, leafy roads, its fern-brakes, its deep grasses, and its vast forests, all dim and dewy and green and delicious, one can sometimes forget modern civilization, which is grotesque, insincere, vulgar, and unutterably clumsy."

In La-Roche-Sur-Yon there were many noble houses which flung wide their doors to welcome L^oic within; old friends of his father showered invitations upon this young man about whom his stormy boyhood and cowboy adventures cast a halo of romance—a thing highly valued in our prosaic age—and who bore the glory of a great name on his broad shoulders with all the *désinvolture* of one truly belonging to *la vieille roche*. There had been much speculation in purely Legitimistic circles at the time when the young Marquis attained his majority. Of course it was known that his sympathies would be Legitimistic, because every bearer of his name had been a staunch Royalist ever since the most remote antiquity; still, there was yet an open field for speculation as to how he would accept the responsibilities of his position, and when he made his appearance at La Roche there was an eagerness displayed to secure him which he viewed with mild amusement.

He knew, of course—how could he help doing so?—that he was a great prize. He had had a twenty-year-long minority—as ambitious mothers of marriageable girls took care to remember—the accumulated profits of which were now ready to his hand, and every feminine breast palpitated when he entered a drawing-room. None of the *charmeuses* he met there could, however, hold a candle to the Vicomtesse Gynette, and once or twice he walked away from her presence with a singularly fascinating

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

new emotion stirring in him; for, although he did not love her as yet, still she was very rapidly taking possession of both his fancy and his feelings. "She reminds me often of Gäidik," he thought, "although physically she does not in the least resemble her; but she has the same candid way of speech, the same freedom from all bias, the same broad-minded frankness, and almost the same luminousness and radiance of the eyes when she speaks, which gives so much warmth and fascination to a countenance."

"Gäidik, always Gäidik!" Madame de Kergoat would have said. Was Gäidik then eternally to remain his standard of perfection?

Still, there was one respect in which the charming Vicomtesse did not play her cards well. She allowed Løic to see too clearly how much she desired to marry him. There is a great truth contained in the famous saying, "*L'objet qui nous échappe est naturellement bien plus attirant que celui qui nous poursuit,*" for men are prone to be wayward, thankless, and given to yearn especially after the unattainable, and in his heart of hearts Løic resented Gynette's too-transparent tenderness. He was irritated sometimes by the strange pathos in her eyes when she looked at him, and, although she was an almost perfect incarnation of purity and dignified great-ladyhood, yet he was sensible that it was, more or less, she who was taking the lead, which fact lessened by half his very sincere admiration for her and dulled his comprehension of this exquisite nature, whose great charm was an entire simplicity of manner and expression.

Originally accepting the Marquis d'Yffiniac's invitation for a mere week-end, a fortnight later Løic was still at La-Roche-Sur-Yon, and neither that old Nobleman nor Ghislain would as yet hear of his leaving them. This period was almost entirely occupied, for one person at

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

least, in sending currents of hatred in the direction of the Vicomtesse Gynette with all the force of a very malignant and rather ingenious mind—that of a little *bourgeoise* living in a dull and scrubby house on the once *Place Napoléon*, above a gayly painted, mirror-lined *coiffeur's* shop. This person felt that there was something radically wrong in the ways of the Providence of pretty women when a great lady like the Vicomtesse, simply because she happened to be a great lady, had no limit to her joys, her luxuries, her pleasures, and possessed an almost inconceivable potency over the souls of men of rank. She, Aline Billot, certainly had incontestable beauty, but yet the success of the day was not with her. (She had only been able to throw herself in Lœic's way three or four times, with absolutely no result.) It was—and how she ground her white teeth at the thought!—with the blue-blooded, clever, impudent, dark-haired Patrician, who was supposed by all the town to keep the young Marquis de Kergoat tied to the ribbons of her fan. This made Madame Billot's naturally irascible temper rise like boiling milk, and she said very savage things indeed about the Vicomtesse in particular, the Aristocracy in general, and a republic which could not succeed in once and for all abolishing all lines of social demarcation. (*Qui n'est pas fichue d'abolir les distances !*)

She herself was a woman in whom the affections had a very slight, the passions a very large place, and, being of quite boundless ambition, she desired above all things to ensnare this magnificent prize, whom she suspected another to have already very nearly landed. And why should she not succeed even at this the eleventh hour? Had not the handsome and wealthy young Baron de Tréguidy fallen a ready victim to her charms—not to mention many other gay Seigneurs, doctors, lawyers, and simple land-owners

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

who successively, or collectively, when the press was great, had witched away at her side the ennui of a small provincial town? For Ghislain had been rash in asserting that the army was her only happy hunting-ground. She was eclectic, was this *jolie parfumeuse*, and far too prudent to reject some big fish struggling in her drag-nets because not clad in red, or blue and golden scales.

"And yet I am an honest woman!" she would scream at her brother when this delicately thrifty personage remonstrated with her regarding what he called her ridiculous disinterestedness. "I am an honest woman! Not one of your accursed Aristocrats is more so than I! If I have lovers; what about it? So have they, the hypocrites, and I never accept a sou—no, not a sou—d' you hear me?" He heard, and knew also that she spoke the truth on this one point—she did not accept a sou—much to his regret, be it said in justice to him.

"*Sacrée, imbécile!*" he would politely reply, "what's the use of it all, then, if it brings you nothing but a bad name?" And, turning to his nieces, who often assisted with charming abandon at these little family amenities, "Oh, if you ever imitate your mother I'll break every bone in your bodies, you little wretches! And as to you, Aline, don't let that Marquis escape you. He is an intimate friend of the d'Yffiniacs, just as Tréguidy was; and though you will as usual refuse to accept anything worth having, the whole clan will again visit my shop, which is disgustingly neglected since you have been wasting your time." At which worse than Harpagonian advice the "little wretches" naturally burst into irreverent and irrepressible laughter.

Such an education had borne plentiful fruits, and Monsieur Lierre's nieces—to put it mildly—had long since lost that delicious bloom of untarnished purity which is the

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

most precious and the frailest possession of a young girl, and which French mothers, to whatever class they may belong, prize and guard above all things.

Poor Rose, who was what one might term a fourth-rate soul enveloped in a first-class skin—her complexion was really unimpeachable, and, together with her dazzling teeth, her only beauty—bent more or less beneath the eternal storms raging between her quarrelsome mother and her utterly conscienceless uncle. She had had a little affair of her own already—a little affair that had forced her indignant parent to hustle her away for a time, and the consequences of which were hidden far away in a remote farming district, where a poor little motherless, nameless babe was being most untenderly trained to the endurance of life's miseries. This adventure had never been forgiven her; indeed, her worthy uncle could not get over the foolishness and paltriness of it. "To fall in love with a common soldier!" he would untiringly repeat. "Who has ever heard of such wicked perversity, such rank immorality?" This punctilious gentleman was rather fond of moralizing when it could be safely done, for he belonged to that class of *petit bourgeois* who are eager to discipline everybody but themselves and those from whose pranks they desire profit, imagining that in some inexplicable way their preachings redound greatly to their own credit. So he and his sister—for once of the same opinion—generally combined their efforts to make Rose's life as unhappy as they could, taunting her with her misdeeds until she sometimes wished the earth would open to swallow her out of their sight.

Lately another dark item had been added to her numerous sins, since her mother, who was as sharp as a needle, had instantly discerned the passionate admiration she entertained for Lœic de Kergoat. "Was it possible," she

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

thought, "that there could exist any girl so stupid as not to understand the immeasurable gulf separating her claims to the young Marquis's possible regard from those of a woman like herself, the widowed Aline Billot?" She was too clever not to be aware of her own many shortcomings, but she knew also that a dunghill flower may have a coarse luxuriance and beauty of its own which often catches the blunted fancies of society. Now, her daughter was not a pretty flower; she had no *chic*, no beauty, no flavor, so it behooved her to remain in her corner until her mother bade her come out of it occasionally to play her predestined rôle of *duenna*. From the full height of her superiority she had stooped good-naturedly during their stay at the sea-side and treated Rose almost as a friend, and in return this insufferable idiot had the insolence and audacity to raise her pale eyes to the man whom she herself had determined to annex. All her recent condescension vanished like magic at the irritation of such an affront.

Lôic had scarcely noticed Rose, had barely been conscious of her existence until the opening day of the *Concours*, but since then a sort of involuntary pity had been aroused in him by her crushed and almost hypnotized appearance. For Madame Billot—had she but known it—he entertained frank contempt. "She is ridiculous, eaten up with vanity, and totally ignorant of her place," he said to Ghislain one morning as they sauntered out of the *Parfumerie Lierre*, where they had made a rather prolonged stay under the fallacious pretext of patronizing the establishment, but really because, having nothing in particular to do, a passing shower had suggested the idea of taking refuge there, and, being amused by the hair-dresser's undeniable *bagout*—which, by-the-way, is a totally untranslatable word, standing as it does for some-

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

thing essentially and solely French—that particular species of ready, superficial, rather coarse wit which is possessed to a supreme degree by the lower middle class of that merry land.

“She is a bit loud, that’s a fact, and rather pronounced in her oglings; but did you notice Rose? My word, she is a queer one; she was fairly devouring you with those big, glassy, owl’s eyes of hers. Evidently to her you are a Fairy Prince, something never imagined before. She is badly browbeaten, by-the-way. I was sorry for her, upon my honor, just now, when Madame, her mamma, sent her so contemptuously to the rightabout.”

“Poor little devil!” Lōic muttered, impatiently. “I can’t help feeling sorry for her, too; she must lead a dog’s life between that clown of an uncle and that overbearing, selfish mother. Well, fortunately, it’s none of our business, but if I were she I’d cut and run; better be a servant-girl in some respectable family than what she is now. Didn’t she say that to-morrow is her birthday? Let’s stop at Royard’s and order some violets for her.”

“You’re not going to send that wretched little girl flowers, are you?” Ghislain asked, aghast.

“Why not?” retorted Lōic. “She’s a poor little beast, kicked and cuffed all day long, and it will give her a minute’s illusion as to her possession of womanly charm; pray, why should I not send her twenty francs’ worth of violets?”

“Because it will convulse this gossipy little hole of a place, and make her jealous mamma furious with her, besides,” the prudent Ghislain argued, rightly and stoutly.

“Confound the woman! I really believe that I shall end by hating her, and I hate to hate such people, because it puts one on a level with them! Come along, I’ll send the violets just to spite her—deuce take it!” And Ghis-

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

lain, seeing that it was quite useless to oppose his obstinate and headstrong friend any further, meekly followed him into Royard's handsome shop.

The principal of that fashionable florist's establishment came forward with a smile to take Lõic's order; and as the latter, egged on by contradiction, was demanding to see some silvered rush baskets—the specialty of the house—he called out to an assistant busy at some distance over a gorgeous funeral wreath:

"Malhorn, bring me the new heart-shaped corbeilles; they are certain to please Monsieur le Marquis."

The name of Malhorn made Lõic prick up his ears, and, much to his astonishment, he recognized the man approaching with the baskets as his mother's former employé.

"How do you do, Malhorn?—are you getting on prosperously since you left Kergõat?" he said, quietly, surveying him with a slightly sardonic little smile.

"Pretty fairly so, Monsieur le Marquis, thank you," was the answer, delivered in the surly tones Lõic remembered so well.

"Glad to hear it," Lõic replied. "I did not know that you were in Vendée. My mother had told me that you had accepted a position as head-gardener somewhere in England."

"I had, but the place did not suit me, and, as Monsieur Rivier had written to me about a job here, I came away at once and have been with Monsieur Royard ever since."

"Monsieur Rivier?" Lõic interrupted, greatly surprised; "why, I must have dropped into a veritable nest of old acquaintances. Do you mean my ex-tutor, who was such a chum of yours ten years ago, Malhorn?"

"No, Monsieur le Marquis, I mean Monsieur George Rivier, his brother, who is a lawyer and pleads at the tribunal here."

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

"Indeed! Well, let me know if I can ever do anything for you; I'll be glad to do so," and, without listening to the man's awkward acknowledgments, he directed his principal to send "that queer little square hamper" full of violets, both purple and white, to Mademoiselle Rose Billot's address.

"The heart-shaped ones would have really been too pronounced and suggestivel" he said, laughing merrily as he and Ghislain turned their faces towards the *Place de la Préfecture*, to which flippant remark his sage friend angrily replied:

"You are an infernal idiot, Lœic! Your gift will be the talk of the town. I could see that already in Royard's amazed expression, and in the nasty little smile of that diabolical-looking assistant of his, who seems once to have been a retainer of your own. They evidently thought you were ordering this gorgeous affair for Gynette, and were paralyzed to find out it was meant for *la p'tite Billot*."

"Oh, don't be ridiculous! I've sent dozens of bouquets to Gynette lately, and many more dozens to all her friends. Why shouldn't I ring in a change for once, and turn my attentions to the *tiers état*. It's idiotic to make such a fuss about a few violets given to a child."

"A nice sort of child!" Ghislain muttered, contemptuously, but Lœic did not, or pretended not to, hear him, for he himself was beginning really to fear that he had committed something of a *bêtise*, and so hastened to turn the conversation, which was a little way of his when eager to avoid being put in the wrong.

Could he but have been aware of the malignant joy with which his erstwhile foe Malghorn recorded the incident, and in what way he did so, he would have been still more convinced of his extreme foolishness.

XV

The Duke—"There's some old saw doth warrant observation.
So it is doubly true—but strange, strange, strange!"

The Page—"What mean you, Sir?"

The Duke—"Why, what I said but now,
The curse of littles, tyranny of trifles,
Of th' abject infinitesimal. Did you tell me
One dammed a watercourse with a wheaten straw
And thereby drowned a city, or another
Hath slain a mailed knight with a grain of sand,
Or given a posy to a nursing infant
To his own death and ruin, I'd believe you!
So evident it seems that Fortune's wheel
For her swift businesses needs must have
A fine and delicate axle."

M. M.

THE old Marquis d'Yffiniac had taken a great fancy to Lōic, and warmly urged him to accompany him to the château of the Duc Audibert d'Hauterive, a celebrated sportsman and M.F.H., where he himself was booked to spend the two first weeks of the hunting season.

"Audibert and I were at school together with your grandfather, my boy," the old Nobleman explained, and he is anxious to refresh his acquaintance with you, whom he has not seen since you were in long clothes. Do come. I had a letter from him this morning asking me positively to bring you. His place is the finest one in all Vendée, and is kept in a fashion that does one's heart good to see, especially nowadays, when fortune has dealt hardly with so many of us. It hurts one to see an old château that has survived the culverins of past wars

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

and the torches of the Revolution left to neglect and decay, but such is not the case with the Château d'Hauterive, for Audibert is enormously rich, and cares for it like the very apple of his eye. Really, you should accept his invitation. I know you would like it all immensely."

Unfortunately, however tempting these inducements were, Lōic's desire to accompany Ghislain back to Yffiniac prevailed. He had had enough of gayeties for the present, and, moreover, he was in a singularly unsettled frame of mind, thanks to his mother's persistent silence, to Gynette's more and more visible ensnarement and determination to marry him whether he liked it or not, and finally to the hornet's nest he had set buzzing about his ears by his ill-advised birthday offering to Rose Billot.

He had had a scene of the highest comicality with the widow Billot on the day following the sending of the violets; for, meeting her by chance on the *Cours*—a lonely and verdant avenue behind the Préfecture—where he was smoking his post-prandial cigarette before dressing for a ball, he had been unable to avoid the encounter and had been flooded with reproaches, tears, and recriminations, capped by a most shameless and disconcerting declaration of love. Indeed, so great had been the lady's agitation that, *nolens-volens*, he had been forced to support her tottering steps and escort her, still sobbing and quaking like a frightened doe, along back streets and poetically moonlit lanes to within a few yards of her dwelling.

"The length and breadth of Vendée will soon be too hot to hold me," quoth Lōic to himself, furiously, as he rapidly retraced his steps. "Curse the woman! Does she imagine that I'm inclined to play Don Juan to her superannuated Juliet. The idea of her throwing her-

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

self at my head in this barefaced fashion!—though it serves me right for playing the fool. Ghislain was correct—I am an infernal idiot!”

The mere thought that he was being made ridiculous by the widow's ardent pursuit was unendurable to him, and his face was still heavily clouded when, an hour later, he made his bow to one of the wittiest and most exclusive of Vendéen great ladies at the entrance of her magnificent salons.

Vicomtesse Gynette was one of the latest to arrive; she was clad in absolutely unrelieved white, diamonds and pearls shining all over her from head to foot, and her entrance was the sensation of the evening, yet her face was singularly pale, and there were faint azure circles beneath her eyes. She felt what the Orientals call an asp at the heart, and found evidently no solace in the enthusiastic homage cast at her little feet throughout the evening. As she sat amid the changing groups of distinguished, high-born, handsome men that bent before her and hung on her slightest word, she looked but for one figure that kept aloof and was leaning moodily against the gilt railing of a balcony opening upon a cedar-circled lawn, where the tall jets of many fountains sprang up like crystal aigrettes in the light of hundreds of delicately tinted lanterns.

“Lôic,” she said, abruptly, to him when she had at last succeeded—by manœuvres which a month ago she would have condemned as utterly despicable—in decoying him into the winter-garden—a marvel of floral splendors, of fairy-like seclusion, and rosy-shadowed fragrance—“Lôic, are you angry with me?”

“Certainly not. What makes you imagine such a thing?” he replied, looking at her with some astonishment, for her tone had a pleading, humble note in it

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

which, in spite of her too frankly betrayed tenderness, he had never heard before that night.

"You do not dislike me, do you?"

"My dear Gynette, what on earth is the matter with you?—are you ill?" he exclaimed, bending towards her to look the better into the dark-blue eyes that met his unflinchingly, and seemed in some strange way to speak of passion and strong resolve, and pride too great not to disregard itself.

"Will you marry me?"

Lôic was too utterly taken by surprise, too stupefied, to reply at once. What could she be thinking of, this exquisitely beautiful, immensely wealthy great lady, to offer herself to him thus? Had the whole world of women gone mad?

"Will you?" she repeated, her gaze still steadfast, though two great tears slipped swiftly from her lashes and rolled unchecked to the plastron of diamonds at her breast.

With a sudden tender impulse Lôic dropped on one knee beside her, and, taking both her cold, trembling little hands in his warm grasp, said, softly:

"Don't speak like that to me, Gynette; I do not deserve it, my poor little girl."

"Oh, Lôic, I know that what I'm doing is—is—degrading and—and—shameful," she said, a little breathlessly, the beating of her heart almost audible in the stillness around them; "but I am past observing the dictates of calm custom and—and—conventional routine. You do not love me, I know it—at least, not as I had hoped you would—but I love you; oh, I do, I do, with every nerve and fibre of me, fiercely, blindly, exclusively! That is what gives me courage to ask you again. Will you marry me, Lôic?"

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

Löic was completely staggered. Here was royal beauty and sweetness wooing with a compelling power of which he had never dreamed—with a brave-eyed, pathetic simplicity that brought a mist before his own vision. To half her loveliness and charm mere chivalry would have yielded, and yet—and yet—such blind confidence bred in him a surprising distrust of himself. And would it be right or fair to take in gold and to pay in lead? Thus he thought in one second's lightning-flash, and then:

"I must repeat it, Gynette," he said, sadly; "I am not worthy of such love as yours. What could I give you in return? Wealth and rank? You have both and to spare. Loyalty and tenderness? You deserve more than that. You would waste your life in fretting impatience at my shortcomings, at my dislike of any curb, of any set rule or duty. You do not know me as I am; you do not realize what I have made my mother and Gäidik already suffer. Give me up, dear, while there is still time. I would only make you miserably unhappy. I know I would, and you would soon regret it if I answered you as you now desire."

"That is for me to judge!" she exclaimed, her voice hoarse with deep feeling, her eyes brimming over with tears. "Such as my life is, it is yours, yours only, yours always, to do with as you please. I will ask in return nothing that you are not ready to give me; only let me be about you and near you as your wife; let me imagine that you love me a little, and I will be content." She stopped with a little catch of the breath that seemed infinitely pitiful to Löic. He was fighting against that sorcery of touching humility in the proud little creature who hitherto had been an undisputed sovereign, yet who from him would accept the yoke of any slavery, however

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

hard to bear. He gazed into her eyes with a fleeting expression of real love.

"You are unwise in tempting me like this," he replied. "I am not the man to make you happy, Gynette, nor any other woman on earth. You are ready to give into my hands your will, your reason, and your soul; I must—ungracious as I may appear to be—show you the consequences of your self-surrender; indeed, I would be a sad wretch had I not the common honesty to do so."

She put out her imprisoned hands in a gesture of supplication.

"For pity's sake, don't try to do that! I know you better than you think; I know how autocratic and self-willed you can be; how high is your temper—I know all your faults, Lõic! I knew them before you went away, when I, a married woman then, already loved you. I say this because it is true, although it hurts my pride to confess it. I have loved no one in all my life but you. Have patience with me, Lõic; try and judge me aright, and understand me if you can. All I ask, after all, is that you should be true to me."

He tried to speak, but she would not let him, and continued, feverishly, for she saw that he was faltering:

"One thing, though, I will not be, and that is unfair to you. I will not have you give up your freedom and your future at my bidding, sacrifice to me your best gifts—your youth and your liberty—on the impulse of the moment. You are going back to Yffiniac to-morrow. While there think of what I have told you to-night, and in a week—in two weeks, if you like—come to me and bring me your answer. Then, as now, I shall be ready to give you all and claim nothing but your entire loyalty and fidelity to me. And now let me go, my dear; do not say another word. I know all you want to tell me. I know

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

you do not love me as lovers do; but I think"—and here a scarlet wave passed over her delicate features—"I think that I can teach you to do so."

Her voice sank, she wrenched her hands from his, and, slipping shadow-like through a tall screen of feathery bamboos, she was gone, leaving Lóic bewildered, very pale, and with all the warm, melting tenderness which for a moment had lighted up his whole face dying down as a leaping flame dies.

What he now felt was no longer tenderness, it was amazement, wonder, pain, and—yes, fear; for Lóic had no vanity, and he dreaded that if he married this confiding, loving woman it would only be to make her miserable. "I'm an untamable animal," he muttered to himself, and his honest, self-distrusting eyes—the eyes of a man who had never known save in the seldom oases of his sister's society what it was to have complete peace from a capricious, harassing, restless feminine influence—saw as in a mirage of the future an endless succession of jealous scenes and hopeless efforts, and he hardened his heart to the memory of that brave gaze and that quivering voice.

In his black, despondent mood he welcomed the sound of approaching voices loudly calling his name, and, quickly slipping his cigarette-case from his pocket, moved in their direction.

"Where have you been, Lóic?" called out Ghislain, who was the foremost of a group of gay youths. "I thought you were here with Gynette?"

"We want you for the cotillion," cried those behind him; "we were despairing of ever finding you. What on earth were you doing?"

"Smoking a cigarette in peace, Messieurs," he answered, lightly; "the smoking-room was crowded and I have a bit of a headache."

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

Ghislain looked curiously at him.

"It's odd for you to have a headache," he said, teasingly. "Surely you are not thinking of leaving us in the lurch?"

"Never!" he answered, with admirably assumed gayety; and, as with apparent eagerness he followed them into the ballroom, the thought of Gynette went with him like a haunting ghost. "Poor little girl!" he repeated again and again to himself, impatiently. "Why could not I have said yes and made her happy, poor little honest Gynette."

His repentance for what he had neglected to do was at that moment quite as extreme as would have been his dismay had he done otherwise, and he cursed himself throughout the night squarely and unstintingly for what he termed his brutality and ingratitude.

Early next morning a card was brought to him by his own man. He had scarcely finished with his bath and his chocolate and was lighting his earliest cigarette. He stared for a second or two at the small, square pasteboard, upon which was engraved "*Georges Rivier, Avocat*," and then said, angrily, "What the devil does the creature want?" and, turning to his man, added, "Go and tell him to call later, Robin; I can't receive him at this hour."

"Deuce take him!" he thought. "Surely his brother's title to our gratitude is not such as to warrant a call!"

Almost immediately Robin, with an angry countenance, reappeared.

"Monsieur le Marquis," he said, in an agitated way, which nothing but strong indignation could have called forth, "this person insists upon—"

"Pardon me, Monsieur le Marquis," said a man who had followed the valet so closely that he was but a yard behind him. "Pardon me, but I must really see you on business of the greatest importance."

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

Lôic was so astonished that for the second time in twenty-four hours he was at a loss for words. In a moment, however, he recovered himself, and, looking very formidable and uncompromising in his white flannel *costume d'intérieur*—which made him appear even broader-shouldered and taller than usual—said, curtly and with no effort to conceal his displeasure:

“This is a rather unwarrantable intrusion on the part of a total stranger, Monsieur.”

“Believe me, Monsieur le Marquis,” the other replied, bowing low, “that only the most serious reasons would have induced me to commit such a breach of etiquette.”

“My memory is a broken reed, Monsieur,” Lôic said, dryly; “this must serve as my excuse for not remembering any incident in my life which could explain the interest you appear to take in me.”

For a second the advocate met the full gaze of the calm, gray eyes fixed upon him, and instantly began to shuffle his feet uneasily.

“Madame la Marquise de Kergoat,” he began, awkwardly enough, for this young man in white flannels struck him with sudden misgivings, “has done me the honor to confide in me to the extent of asking me to call upon you with regard to a very delicate—a—ah—very regrettable—ah—situation, and, therefore, I am now only fulfilling a mission.”

“My mother has asked you to call on me,” Lôic asked, hardly believing the testimony of his ears, “in order to discuss a delicate situation? I fail to follow you. Will you be so good as to explain yourself a little more clearly?”

“Certainly, Monsieur le Marquis, certainly, if you will kindly allow it, and if you will permit me to sit down”—a courtesy which Lôic had purposely neglected to extend.

“Sit down, by all means, if you think it will disentangle

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

your ideas; for if I did not see with my own eyes that you are sober, I should be tempted to believe that you are yielding to the dreams of intoxication. Perhaps you know that your brother was some ten years ago dismissed from my mother's employment under peculiarly disgraceful circumstances. This alone, it seems to me, makes against the chance of the Marquise de Kergoat's reposing any very great confidence in you."

If Rivier No. 2 was disconcerted, he certainly pulled himself together sufficiently not to show it. His was a secretive sort of face, somewhat comelier than his brother's, but of the same pasty complexion, crowned by sleek, thin hair, framed by lank, pompous-looking side-whiskers, and furnished with dull eyes of a nondescript blue that seemed admirably adapted for the concealment of thought. With a square-nailed, ill-cared-for hand he nonchalantly waved aside this small reminiscence.

"Not necessarily," he said, softly. "Madame la Marquise de Kergoat is too just to make one brother responsible for the misdeeds of the other, if such misdeeds had really existed; but permit me to hope that this was not the case, since it was through Madame la Marquise de Kergoat's kind mediation that my brother obtained, a year ago, the post of professor of mathematics at the College of Nîmes. Indeed, it is owing to the fact that he paid his respects to Madame la Marquise a few days ago that she became aware of my residence in this neighborhood, with the result of my receiving the letter which constitutes my credentials. Her orders are peremptory."

Lôic silently surveyed his visitor for a moment. He saw no reason to doubt the man's statements, nor, beyond a slight initial shock, caused by the choice of messenger, was he even surprised. He knew only too well that his mother belonged to that type of autocrat which cannot

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

exist without favorites and protégés. A succession of these, both male and female, had "had their day and ceased to be," and most of them had ruled the Marquise with a rod of iron within their sphere of influence, and sometimes even outside of it, in matters of the most private concern. Viewed collectively, all were more or less detrimental, but, aside from this common characteristic, they were as strangely unassorted as the hoard of a magpie, ranging from the worthy Rivier himself to a flat-faced Prussian lady-companion whom Gaidik, some years before, had thrown bodily out of the room and out of employment, ostensibly for gross insolence to her mistress, but really because the woman had attempted to strike her beloved little brother. By making use of such psychological moments, Gaidik and Count René had rid the house of many, and more had "died a natural death," but some, as in the present instance, had succeeded in returning from outer darkness, even after many years.

"Peremptory, eh?" Lóic replied, at last, having swiftly considered the situation and clearly perceived that his old enemy, the tutor, was to have a hand in directing this new offensive warfare. "Well, my very dear Sir, if you have any message to deliver, pray do so without further circumlocution, for I like plain dealing and straight speech."

He was puffing steadily at his cigarette and glancing lazily at the now thoroughly uneasy *envoyé extraordinaire* through little blue wreaths of smoke.

"This being the case, Monsieur le Marquis," the lawyer said, with an effort at forensic impressiveness, "I am sorry to say that Madame your mother, thoroughly disapproves of your present stay and relations in La-Roche-Sur-Yon, and that she desired me to come and tell you

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

what I know about a certain person with whom she fears that you are imprudently entangling yourself. You must pardon me for textually repeating what she did me the honor of writing to me on the subject."

"My mother wrote you textually this?" L^oic asked, with characteristic bluntness, but without as yet giving the slightest sign of temper.

"Yes, Monsieur le Marquis, she did," asserted the other, blandly. "If it were not so, would I have ventured to come here on such an errand?"

"If I thought you capable of that," said L^oic, looking at him thoughtfully, "I would throw you out of the window. As it is, I will only throw you down-stairs presently for presuming to accept such a mission."

Georges Rivier bit his ratty fingers anxiously; he was quickly acquiring the impression that he had undertaken too heavy a task, in his eagerness to earn a five-hundred-franc note.

"You have, no doubt," L^oic went on, in the same calm and even voice, "your credentials about you?"

"No, Monsieur le Marquis, no. I was merely requested to tell you the antecedents of a certain widow Billot, who—"

"Don't let us mention names, if you please; it is execrably bad form, to begin with, and, secondly, I fail to recognize your right to come and give me advice upon that or any other subject, even by my mother's directions. I am not responsible to any one for my actions, least of all to you, and I must recommend you to mind your own business in the future. What I merely wanted to be certain of is that you were really sent on this scandal-peddling expedition, that is all."

"I—I—don't understand why you should be so indignant, Monsieur le Marquis," the lawyer hastily protested.

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

He was ludicrously disconcerted. The cue for the sonorous moral rôle he had expected to play did not seem to be forthcoming, and he was rapidly getting apologetic. "I am a man some years older than yourself, and, having at my finger-ends the disgraceful past of the—ah—person I was requested to warn you against, it is quite natural that I should come and set you on your guard. Believe me, I am actuated entirely by good feeling, and my motives are strictly above all question of personal interest or personal acrimony. The duties of a son towards his mother are—" But a sudden flash of Lóic's half-closed eyes and a faint curl of his firm, contemptuous lips brought the preacher to an abrupt pause.

"Am I to conclude, Monsieur le Marquis," he resumed, after a silence which something in Lóic's attitude rendered extremely disquieting to him, "that you decline to hear what I have to say?" His tone was one of mingled obsequiousness and exasperation, and his loose lips were getting unsteady—a weak mouth is apt to betray its possessor at inconvenient moments.

"You are entirely correct. You carried your little pickings to the wrong shop when you brought them to me. And now be so good as to go at once while I still remember that I am in a friend's house, where I have no right to make a disturbance," Lóic said, grimly, rising from his chair in a quick and rather alarming manner. Rivier, who had gone very white, tried to hold his ground.

"You m-m-must not speak to m-m-me like that, Monsieur le Marquis," he stammered, horribly frightened. "I am an honest gentleman who means you well."

Lóic, standing close to him, looked down at this paltry personage with immeasurable disgust.

"My honest gentleman," he said, without raising his

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

voice, "leave this room, I tell you, and at once, or I'll make you!"

"You dare not touch me!" the man cried out, completely losing his head. "I'll have you up for assault if you but put a finger on me!"

These imprudent words were hardly out of his mouth before Løic's hand was on his collar, and, calmly lifting him off his feet, without any apparent effort, he carried him through the door into the passage, and then lightly, easily, just as he might have thrown a snarling dog, he flung him down the broad flight of shallow stairs—which, fortunately, was thickly carpeted—into the hall below. The terrified advocate fell unhurt, even unbruised, and as he rose his hat was kicked down after him. Mechanically he picked it up; his face was almost blue, his eyes for once had lost all their dulness, and were alive with evil expression, and his lips moved, but without a sound.

"It had to come to this," Løic said, still with perfect quiet, sauntering down-stairs with his hands in his pockets. "Sooner or later we would have met again, and now my debt to you being partly paid, I hope, for your sake, that we never will." Whereupon, with exquisite politeness, he opened a side door and ushered Monsieur Rivier out.

Never a word did the man say until he had placed the three stone steps leading to the gardens between him and Løic's ready fist, then, with an expression of extraordinary hatred and malignity in his bloodshot eyes—the look of some one rejoicing inwardly over a deep and certain revenge—he muttered, between his clinched teeth: "Very good—oh, very good! Now, my fine Marquis, I will not spare you!"

It is to be presumed that Løic did not hear, for he stood quite still, watching this sorry object slinking away

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

with the light of the bright autumnal morning sun shining on a face where humiliation and deadly rage were fighting for mastery. "Another friend that I have just made for myself," he said, lightly, half aloud, and as he slowly walked back to his rooms he added, with a weary little sigh, "But what an ignominy the whole thing is!"

Lôic drove back that afternoon with Ghislain to Yffiniac, feeling singularly depressed. A tepid drizzle of rain had set in shortly after mid-day, blurring the shadowed landscape, and this perhaps accentuated his unusually sombre mood. He had no clew of any kind as to what his mother's dealings with such a man as Georges Rivier could possibly portend, and nothing that his ingenuity could suggest offered even a faintly satisfactory solution. Write to ask her he would not; he was far too deeply hurt and disgusted for that. That his mother, a great lady, hitherto only guilty of caprice and of unwise outbursts of temper, should suddenly set spies after him utterly confounded his simple, straightforward mind — and then he remembered Malghorn. "Ah," he thought, "that is the informer! He must have written or made that brute Rivier write about the violets. Well, Gàidik was right, as usual; she always said that gypsy was a thorough bad lot."

"What's the matter with you?" Ghislain asked at this point, breaking into his exasperating train of thought.

Lôic did not look at him.

"Nothing," he said, shortly. "What should be the matter?"

Ghislain laid his hand affectionately on his friend's arm. "You are not in any trouble, Lôic?" he asked, vaguely alarmed.

"No, my dear chap, of course not."

"Are you quite sure of that?" the other insisted,

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

"because there is mighty little I wouldn't do for you, and I'd take it ill if you did not call upon me in an emergency."

Truly, Ghislain was startled out of his usual joyousness by Lóic's drawn, almost haggard face, but seeing that his questions seemed unwelcome he forbore to repeat them, and the two young men drove on through the softly falling rain, chatting fitfully of indifferent things.

The shore road they followed, after leaving the forest lands, was very lonely. The only sign of life was the occasional figure of a gooseherd, wrapped in his wide mantle, showing dark against the iron sky on some distant elevation of the illimitable moorland, scarred here and there with peat-cuttings that beckoned the eye across its broken surface of furze and heather to the far-off horizon. This empty level merged towards the north into a great marsh formed by some ancient inroad of the ocean—a wild expanse of earth and water mingled and mixed together in a most dangerous and inextricable chaos, which is penetrable only to the very few who know the secret of the treacherous little paths that twist and turn like snakes among the bottomless quagmire.

On the other side of the road the pale sands of the gently sloping beach met the ripples of a singularly quiet tide, gray as the heaven above it, save where the diffused light was reflected in shaded silver tints, melting and re-appearing with every deep, silent breath of the sea. The Vendéen coast can be wild enough, and its storms are almost—not quite—as celebrated as the Breton ones, but to-day it was all hopelessly sad and dreary; even the few fishing-boats in the offing looked motionless, their dark hulls and tawny sails seeming to rise and fall slowly with the throbbing of the giant pulse beneath them, without advancing a cable's length in any direction.

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

By the time they reached Yffiniac the whole sky had become a lowering arch of deluge, pools of rain had turned the paddocks into lagoons, and many of the pretty flower-beds in the lower portions of the park were half submerged. All that night and the next day rain beat relentlessly at the castle windows, and as at four in the afternoon Ghislain and Lœic were disconsolately watching the drenched landscape a telegram was brought in for the former.

"Oh, Lœic," he exclaimed, after rapidly glancing at it, "my uncle has had a stroke of apoplexy, and the Duke telegraphs that I must come at once." His sun-tanned, jolly face had grown rigid, and it was only after a few minutes that he continued, in a changed voice: "Can you stay here until you hear from me, or I come back? I wish you could."

"Of course I will, my dear fellow. You can rely implicitly upon me," Lœic replied, simply, and the two turned from each other without further words, too much upset to speak of ordinary subjects and hardly daring to mention the one all-important one, until the brougham drove up to the door and Ghislain hurriedly started for the nearest railroad station.

Left alone, Lœic was at liberty to give free rein to his annoyance at the present condition of his own affairs, thrown into a yet gloomier light by his anxiety concerning the Marquis d'Yffiniac, of whom he had grown very fond. He sat for a long time in the library before a roaring fire, his legs stretched out before him, a cigarette between his lips, wishing with all his might that the world had but one neck, so that he could cut through it at one stroke!

He was restless and still greatly unsettled as, later on, he paced the flower-filled gallery running along the whole

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

length of the second floor before dressing for dinner. There was something decidedly amiss and jangling in his life, and he felt so wretchedly lonely that to distract his depressing thoughts he began to draw pictures in his mind of how Gynette would look as Mistress of Kergoat. The place was made for her and she for the place, he mused. Why, then, should this devil of pride and contrariness which was in him keep her away from it? Or was it pride and contrariness—and not rather merely because she was an entirely new, unsought, self-suggested idea that he was as yet unaccustomed to contemplate? A lovely idea, to be sure, a most winsome and attractive idea—here he almost lost himself in a throng of rosy visions, but, rousing at length from his reveries, and looking out upon the rolling woods and rain-smear'd park of Yffiniac, he suddenly laughed a weary, bitter little laugh which echoed strangely beneath the glass dome of the gallery. Just at that minute, somehow, it was difficult to come to a decision.

Presently his servant brought him his letters—letters came to Yffiniac twice a day, fetched by a groom on horseback from the little post-office four miles up the coast—and, curiously enough, the first missive he noticed on the tray was from Gynette. It ran as follows:

“It is not surprising,” she said, without preliminary or prefix, “that you should have refrained from accepting the offer of my whole life—of my whole love! What is more so is that you should not have had the loyalty to tell me your real reasons for so doing. This morning I received a letter from your mother, who, in the name of our old friendship, implores me to use my influence—note the humor of it all—in order to make you renounce the woman with whom you are, it appears, so madly infatuated. The letter is heart-breaking. Shortly afterwards I was honored by the visit of your mother’s ‘*homme d'affaires*,’ a rather sinister personage called Georges Rivier. He insisted upon telling me all the ins and outs of your little romance, the scenes you

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

made your mother, the way in which you followed this woman here, and many other details which I entreated him to spare me, but he argued that Madame de Kergoat was crazed with grief and had sent him to implore my aid. That I will not give! And, moreover, no words of mine would weigh in the balance, as I but too well know, were I inclined to utter them. I am justly punished for having stooped to offer myself to you—like that other whom you preferred to me all along. Only two days ago I gave you the chance of telling me the truth, and you had not the ordinary decency to do so. I was well aware that you were flighty, and somewhat unreliable where women are concerned; but how could I conceive such treachery? You pretended loyalty and affection; you tacitly promised to consider what I had told you, and the way you keep this promise is to degrade me in my own esteem and in that of my peers. Your mother has certainly confided in others, for already I gather from hints dropped and allusions levelled at me, whom many thought—as I, alas! almost thought myself—your fiancée, that your unfragrant secret is public property. I will never pardon you this! I will never speak to you again if I can help it, and I blush to remember how passionately I have loved you. You would only distress me uselessly in opening afresh a subject which I devoutly trust is closed forever between us. Besides which, I am leaving La-Roche-Sur-Yon to-night for destinations unknown, so it would be lost time to write or to come—I would not believe a word of justification or explanation. I think that I never hated anything as I hate you!

GYNETTE.

“P.S.—Poor Gaidik!—she is lucky to be so far away; and to be spared the shame I endure.”

Lôic grew ashy white as he read this savage denunciation, with its truly feminine Parthian arrow at the end. The faint jessamine perfume of the paper upon which it was written turned him a little sick; then, suddenly, he began to laugh immoderately, to exhaustion, till the tears came in his eyes and his sides positively ached, a fresh spasm seizing him with every glance at the crumpled letter lying at his feet.

“That’s the bouquet!” he at last said, aloud, in quivering tones. “There cannot be anything funnier than

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

this," and again he relapsed into fits of laughter which, in a being less strong of nerve might have soon become closely related to hysterics.

His was a strangely calm, impassive face, however, when an hour later he took his place in solitary grandeur at his friend's deserted dinner-table. The solitude was a relief now, for it would have been almost impossible to conceal his trouble from Ghislain's vigilant eye. Hitherto he had taken life as a light sort of business, governed mostly by his fancy of the moment, but now suddenly it had assumed a very different aspect, and the directing power seemed so completely taken out of his hands that he was entirely confused and bewildered. After a rapid pretence at eating what was set before him, he rose, told the butler to serve coffee in the hall, and ensconced himself in a deep arm-chair near the fire.

The hall at Yffiniac opened straight upon the south terrace, and was an ideal place for reveries, with its huge hearth upon which it would have been sacrilege to burn anything but whole tree-trunks, its Persian rugs as thick as moss and with a bloom on them like that of a ripe plum, its immense arm-chairs and settees, and its general air of perfect and lounging comfort.

On that eventful evening its luxurious cosiness was especially welcome and soothing, for the weather had grown worse with the coming of the night, and every now and then the wind, which had been rising and falling and rising again all day, was rattling the casements as with furious unseen hands, and blew down the gigantic chimney like a choir of weirdly wailing ghosts.

Rocked by this whistling symphony, Loïc curled himself more closely in his chair, and again began to think over the same weary round. Which of all this series of calamities that had lately fallen upon him was due to

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

his fault? Certainly he had been foolish ever to set his foot in the *parfumerie* queened over by Madame Billot; but how could he have foreseen what this slight imprudence would bring about? How, also, could he have reckoned with his mother's perversity, Gynette's cruel credulousness, Rivier's and Malghorn's interference? He found himself shrugging his shoulders contemptuously at the thought of all the different factors which had conspired against him. It mattered not, of course now, what had led to his present eminently unenviable situation, since the situation existed, but he was bitterly incensed against the three women who had conjured it up—his mother, Gynette, and the widow Billot.

"Oh, my little Gäidik! Why aren't you here?" he muttered. "You alone could disentangle this sorry skein for me!" and with a blessing and a curse fighting on his lips he momentarily gave up the attempt to puzzle out his troubles, and, lying back still more deeply in his chair, looked vacantly at the fire. He felt strangely tired, and must have dropped into a short doze; for, in the curious, unformulated fashion of dreams, he suddenly thought that Gäidik had softly glided into the room and was sitting opposite to him. As clearly as clearly could be he saw her. She had not changed during their separation, and he gazed at her, asking himself, in a singular, semilucid fashion, whether she was not really there, but felt afraid to move for fear of setting the vision—if vision it were—to flight. Yes, it must be she, indeed. Here was the graceful little figure, so perfect in its outlines, here the exquisite oval of the face, the deep-set, black-lashed eyes, dark gray in serious moments, lustrous and sparkling like aquamarines when a smile shone through them, the small, proudly curved mouth, the obstinate chin, the rippling masses of auburn hair, dusky as ripe chestnuts

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

in the shadow, gleaming like pink copper where the fire-light played on it—nay, he could even see the faint, delicate amber of the colorless complexion which toned in so uniquely with the tints of eyes and hair—surely it was she! Should he get up and clasp her close in his arms, pillow his weary head on her lap, and tell her all his woes? He made an unconscious movement towards her, but fell back, wondering, in a frightened way, why she was dressed all in black, why she looked so sorrowful and held out her tiny hands so imploringly towards him.

All at once he became broad and staring awake; his eye might have really seen something or his ear unconsciously heard a voice, for the sound of his name seemed to linger on the warm air of the room. "Lôic, please don't, Lôic!" He sat bolt upright, to find, alas, the opposite chair untenanted; but an agonized echo of his name was certainly tossing on the air outside. This time, however, it was not "Lôic" that he heard, but "*Monsieur de Kergôat, Monsieur de Kergôat, êtes vous là!*" Just at that moment there was a lull in the increasing violence of the gale, and in the momentary stillness the rapid patter of hurrying feet ascended the steps of the terrace.

With a sense of amazement almost painful in its intensity, he sprang to the door and flung it open, letting in a great buffet of rain-soaked wind and a dripping little figure that rushed into his arms, crying out in terror: "Save me! Hide me! They are after me! Save me, Monsieur le Marquis!"

XVI

Ho! rulers all, who would featly deal
And frame all things to your hearts' desire,
The willow wand ye may cleave with steel,
But iron is wooed with fire!

Or e'er ye mount for the flying course
Consider well of your untried steed,
For low-bred cattle ye break with force,
But the Arab no bit will heed.

Armed, like the rose with her scent and thorn,
Ye may laugh at doubts and corroding fears,
For the will that's proof unto rage and scorn
By weakness is won, and tears.

M. M.

GENTLY but firmly L^oic unclasped the clinging arms of the frenzied girl and drew her quickly into the hall, but suddenly he felt the life going from the hand he held and was just in time to catch her as she fell forward unconscious and helpless. It took him a second or so to realize what had happened—and no wonder—then he laid her at full length on a divan and turned to go in search of water—which element he supposed to be the necessary adjunct of every fainting-fit—but a glance at her already half-drowned condition made him modify this plan, and, taking from the tray on which his coffee had been served his untouched glass of liqueur-brandy, he knelt on one knee, slid an arm under his patient's head, and succeeded, more or less completely, in forcing part of its contents down her throat, after which he drew her wet

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

cloak from around her, took off her battered hat, and set to chafe her icy hands.

A man is generally not seen to advantage when administering to an unconscious woman; but Lóic was not apt to be either clumsy or awkward under any circumstances, and he managed to acquit himself of his task with edifying deftness; so much so, indeed, that his efforts soon met with their due reward, for the girl opened her eyes just in time to save herself from a second dose of brandy, and stared wildly about her.

"You are better now, Mademoiselle Rose, are you not?" Lóic asked, encouragingly, and in a cheerful tone, which seemed to indicate that her surprising arrival and the extraordinary words she had pronounced before fainting were to be classed among quite ordinary and natural matters. "Now drink that," he continued, peremptorily, holding forth the remainder of the cordial. He divined, and correctly so, that the girl was of those who feel more comfortable when domineered over and constrained to obey, for she complied without a murmur, and immediately a reawakening of intelligence dawned in her eyes. Lóic was watching her in silence; he confidently expected some further hysterical display—being versed in the ways of women—but she was evidently still too dazed to rouse herself from her torpor, and sat on the divan with both arms hanging limply at her side, the soft light from a neighboring lamp gleaming upon her wet, dishevelled hair, and defining her white face against the dark tapestries beyond, looking intensely wretched and taking absolutely no notice of him.

"Mademoiselle Rose," he said at last, speaking slowly, as one speaks to a child—"Mademoiselle Rose, won't you tell me now what has happened to you?"

The girl looked up with eyes dilated and vague at first,

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

but gradually their expression changed to extreme terror, and suddenly, with a gurgling moan, she threw herself at his feet, collapsing in a heap like a broken doll.

"What on earth can they have done to her?" L^oic asked himself, as he raised her and placed the drooping, trembling form in one of the broad arm-chairs on the hearth-corner. He was too kind-hearted and generous not to be moved by the sight of such heart-broken misery and fear, but his pity was mixed with unconscious irritation, and it was almost severely that he said:

"You must try and pull yourself together, Mademoiselle Rose. At any moment a servant may come in and your presence be discovered, so you see that we have no time to lose if I am to help you out of your trouble, whatever it is?" She was sobbing now in a long-drawn, piteous sort of way, but after a little she checked herself, looked up at him, and tried to rise. With a gesture that was almost a command he restrained her, and continued, in the same grave tone:

"You must be aware that here I am not in my own house, and that, apart from a thousand other reasons, this one would be sufficient to prevent my offering you hospitality. Tell me why you have run away from your home, and especially why you have come to me."

"You will think me mad beyond all pardon if I tell you," she whispered between her sobs.

"No," he answered her, "I will probably think you merely human."

She did not quite understand; but the hot blood surged into her face to the very roots of her hair, and she sank her head between her shoulders.

"I came," she faltered at last, "because they made my life a burden—on your account—because they beat

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

me and called me names, and were going to imprison me in my grandmother's house beyond the marshes."

"On my account?" L^oic asked, in amazement. "My poor girl, how can that be? I never spoke to you or even to your mother more than six times in my whole life. You must be dreaming."

"I know!—I know," she went on, in the same trembling whisper. "I have no right to expect that you should help me—but you—you sent the violets—and even before that they had noticed—"

"Noticed what?" he asked, impatiently, almost roughly, for the mention of those luckless violets was really more than he could stand just then.

"That I care—for you," she said, so low that he but just caught the words.

"Mademoiselle Rose," he said, deeply annoyed, "I am afraid that you are a very romantic young woman. You have done a very imprudent and very foolish thing. Yet it may not be too late to repair it. I will, if you permit me, take you back at once to La-Roche-Sur-Yon and speak to your mother in such a fashion that she will forgive your—escapade, promise to treat you more kindly, and let by-gones be by-gones. I will demonstrate to her how little she has to fear from me, and if she is a reasonable woman she will be the first to try and avert a scandal."

His words sounded harsh, almost cruel, in his own ears, but he felt that if he yielded one iota to her hysterical sentimentality he was lost. Moreover, he could not bring himself to believe that she really loved him, thanks to his utter lack of vanity—L^oic, like the ornithorhynchus, was of a species peculiar and apart, a handsome and captivating man who had no fatuity in his composition—and he stared angrily for a moment at the girl's

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

stooping form. How well, he thought, did he know that sort of woman! How familiar to him was every little trick of speech, of pose, of glance! A strange sense of monotony came over him who had been so steadily courted by women; the very words, "I care for you," still ringing in his ears, were such as had been used to him on a dozen occasions—aye, by that girl's mother herself—even by— He stamped his foot. Was he going to compare Gynette to those others? Rose, startled by the gesture, shuddered nervously.

"Oh, Monsieur le Marquis," she pleaded, "don't be angry! Please, please listen to me; have patience for just a minute longer!"

Lôic could have laughed aloud. "Monsieur le Marquis." Truly the *manie des grandeurs* was hereditary in the Billot family! She reminded him of her grandiloquent mamma; but so imploringly did she gaze at him that he said, more gently: "I am listening, but, for God's sake, be brief. Every moment we waste here is an additional danger to you."

Thus admonished, she did her best to master herself, although there was a suspicious catch in her voice and tears still ran from her wide, light-colored eyes as she began to speak, while he mechanically fingered an unlighted cigarette.

"I cannot accept your offer, Monsieur le Marquis," she said, "because I am simply unable to do so. If I were to go back home now they would lock me up in a reformatory—an awful sort of place for—for bad women. I know them, and that is just what they would do. They did all they could to prevent my ever seeing you when you came to the shop, and I was really a prisoner, always watched by one of them, either my mother or my uncle, during the last days of your stay at Monsieur le Marquis

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

d'Yffiniac's, and they swore that if I ever attempted to see you they would put me away in—that place."

The whole scene still seemed so utterly unreal to Lôic that he could scarcely believe he was hearing aright. Violently he threw the unlighted cigarette into the fire, and, bending to look searchingly at her, exclaimed, incredulously, "Are you sure that you are not exaggerating?"

"No, Monsieur le Marquis, I am telling you the real truth; and what is true, also, is that if you do take me back I shall kill myself. I am not saying this to force your pity, but because I am determined to do it." The last words were wrung from her like water from a twisted cloth. It was certainly the truth which she spoke, and Lôic looked at her aghast.

"You are talking nonsense," he said, losing all patience; but she did not heed him at all and continued, passionately: "You do not know them as I do, Monsieur le Marquis. I have been their drudge and their victim for years, and I am sick of it. What is there for me to live for? No, no! I will kill myself, that I promise you. I swear it on the Cross! If they catch me—and they may be after me already—I'll kill myself here before your eyes. So, for God's sake, don't cast me away! If you do, you'll be the cause of my death."

Lôic was absolutely nonplussed. Every fibre of his being cried aloud to him that a great danger hung suspended over him, imminent to fall, so long as that girl remained there; but what could he do? He could not throw her out into the storm and the night; he could not give her his protection; he had no place where he could safely take her. What was he to do?

"There is no need for tragedy," he said at length; "the situation is sufficiently grave without it. You must know that to remain even one night under this roof

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

with me ruins you. Tell me of some place where I can take you, and I will give you all the money you need to live wherever you like, but I cannot keep you with me. That is impossible. Heaven knows what it all means! I have not brought this trouble upon you; I hardly know you. And yet you may be telling the truth when you say that you are in danger. Speak; explain what you want, and I'll do my best."

The storm was still raging and shrieking outside; but in one of the periodical brief pauses of the wind that followed Lóic's last question a fuller, rounder note was suddenly heard overscoring the loud rush of the rain in rapid crescendo; the soaked gravel of the avenue was grating and splashing beneath swift wheels and the rapid trot of a pair of horses. Next moment they would be at the door, and the two occupants of the hall looked at each other in dismay.

"Here they come!" Rose exclaimed, starting to her feet. "Oh, what shall I do? What shall I do?"

"Hush!" Lóic whispered. "Come here!" and with the coolness which always stood him in such good stead when prompt resolution was needed, he snatched the girl's wet cloak and hat from the floor, seized her by the shoulder, and, lifting a width of the tapestry from the wall to the left of the hearth, he touched the centre of an elaborately carved lotus-flower in the wainscoting, and the whole panel swung inward, revealing a narrow passage within the thickness of the masonry—the one, in fact, which Ghislain had shown him with such glee on the night of his arrival at Yffiniac. Into it he thrust the trembling girl and her belongings, saying, in a tone admitting of no resistance, but much more kindly than he had as yet used to her: "Don't be afraid, and don't move till I come for you. There is a bench right here; sit down and keep quiet!"

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

Swiftly he secured the panel, dropped the tapestry over it, and, returning to the fire, sat down, stretched himself out at full length, and closed his eyes as if overcome by sleep. Nor was he a minute too soon; for hardly had he thus installed himself when a footman tiptoed into the room, and, after decorously clearing his throat once or twice, and finally coughing gently behind his hand to awaken him, after the approved and stagey fashion of his kind, ventured to state that a Person stood without demanding admittance on business suffering no delay.

"Eh! What?" quoth Lôic, rubbing his eyes and yawning in a manner to dislocate his jaw. "You must be mad! At this hour, and in this weather? Tell him that Monsieur le Comte is absent."

The footman explained that it was not Monsieur le Comte, but Monsieur le Marquis whom the person craved to see; that he personally had attempted to dismiss him, but that he had, much to his regret, been unsuccessful. What did Monsieur le Marquis wish done about it?

Monsieur le Marquis consented, after some further parley, and with extremely bad grace, to find out for himself what the devil this intruder wanted, and two minutes later the little hair-dresser of the once Place Napoléon was ushered in.

Lôic was one of those unfortunate people whose sense of humor is irrepressible, striking often at the worst possible moment, and the incongruities of the situation suddenly forced themselves upon him so powerfully that he had all he could do not to burst out laughing. Mastering this untimely mirth, however, by a truly heroic effort, he raised himself slowly on one elbow, and, half closing his eyes, as though better to absorb the surprising spectacle before him, he said, with admirably assumed incredulity:

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

"What! Monsieur Lierre!" for this was really the perfumer's name, and with poetical apropos he had called his shop after himself. "*Au berceau de Lierre*—can I believe my eyes? Is it really myself whom you wish to honor with a visit?"

It may have been that the man detected the shade of irony in the formality of the question, for he paused half-way across the room with nervous hesitation, and his voice shook as he replied, obsequiously, "I entreat you to excuse my indiscretion, Monsieur le Marquis, but I am hard pressed, indeed, and this alone induced me to intrude upon you."

He certainly looked hard pressed, for he actually panted as he spoke, and the warmth of the room, coaxing the dampness from his sodden clothes, surrounded him with a slight vapor like that of a newly washed cloth emerging from the wringer. Never had anybody looked more mean and paltry than did this artist of the comb and brush, with his pale-yellow hair and scraggy beard, his sallow face, his servile manners, and under-sized, narrow-chested form.

"I am here," he continued, evidently taking Lõic's silence for acquiescence, "to ask—a—a strange—ah—question of you, Monsieur le Marquis."

"I will endeavor to answer it," Lõic said, carelessly, pointing to a chair; "but won't you sit down, my good Sir?"

No. Monsieur Lierre would not sit down, his clothes were, alas, very wet, and, moreover, his time was short.

Again Lõic waited in the same extremely unsympathetic silence for further information, which seemed difficult to come by.

"You know my niece Rose, Monsieur le Marquis?" the little man at length blurted out after some moments of fidgeting embarrassment.

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

"I do. Is that your strange question?"

"She has run away, Monsieur le Marquis, and I have cause to think that she is in this neighborhood. Have you—have you—" Here he came to a dead stop; really his question was a difficult one to formulate, and Monsieur le Marquis, casting lazy glances alternately up at the ceiling and down towards his own exquisitely shod feet, indicative of no curiosity whatever with regard to Mademoiselle Rose's fate, gave him but poor encouragement to proceed.

Still, after humming and hawing for a full minute, the little hair-dresser took courage, and, stepping closer to L^oic, said rapidly, as if eager that the murder should be out as speedily as possible:

"I am here to-night because we think that she has fled to demand your protection; she is a crazy sort of girl, is Rose, and capable of anything—yes, Monsieur le Marquis, of anything—and, pardon me for saying so frankly, she has a romantic admiration for Monsieur—indeed, her mother and I noticed from the first the ardent glances which she dared to cast upon Monsieur; we reproved her again and again, but quite without avail; and now, after making us a scene of considerable violence, she has fled, as I have just had the honor of mentioning—fled with a threat on her lips to the effect that you—you, Monsieur le Marquis—would protect her and place her out of our reach! Surely I am justified in calling upon you, in the name of our family honor, to entreat you not to uphold her in her criminal waywardness should she really appeal to you."

"But," said L^oic, with a mixture of his native Breton calmness and his own delicate irony, "would it not be safer to wait until your niece has claimed my protection before assuming so dramatic an attitude? First catch your hare, my good Monsieur Lierre, you know!"

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

Evidently this irate uncle knew nothing positive, L^oic reflected, and so he began to enjoy the situation after a fashion. The two men looked into each other's eyes in silence. L^oic was smiling, but Lierre was as solemn as an owl.

"Are you quite alone, Monsieur le Marquis?" he asked.

"As you see, Monsieur Lierre—as you see," L^oic answered, quietly. "But why this question? Would it calm your fears to search the house for your vagrant niece? As far as I am concerned, you are horribly welcome to do so."

"Oh, Monsieur le Marquis!"

"Well, then, what do you want? It's about time you should explain yourself. Here you arrive like a bomb, apparently to ask me whether I have any stray damsels concealed about my person, and it seems to me that I have humored you quite long enough. Speak out, man, or else prosecute your investigations elsewhere."

Lierre precipitately retreated a step or two. He was very frightened, for there had suddenly leaped to L^oic's gray eyes a gleam which he did not like.

"I assure you, Monsieur le Marquis, that I meant no disrespect," he stammered; "the fact is that I must have been misled by deceptive appearances. I—I—I beseech you to accept my humblest apologies; moreover, I think I know now where she must be. Alas, Monsieur le Marquis, she is a sorry specimen, is my niece Rose—I say it to our shame. She has already cost us much distress; but that is enough; she will not be indulged any further, you can trust me for that."

He could certainly be trusted to commit any sort of villany, if his present expression did not belie him, revealing, as it did, a finished scoundrel who would hesitate not a whit to perpetrate any cruelty upon a defenceless

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

woman. L^oic felt his ears getting hot, and his hands tingled to administer to him the thrashing he so richly deserved, but, since prudence was obviously imperative, he said, carelessly:

"Indeed! And how do you propose to curb the young lady's evil passions?"

"By locking her up safely in a place designed expressly for such as she," the little man replied, with so extravagant a ferocity that for a moment he succeeded in looking positively terrible. "I'll teach her to behave, Monsieur le Marquis; for we don't tolerate vice in our family!"

"When it profits you nothing," was on the tip of L^oic's tongue, but he still had sufficient mastery over himself to leave the words unuttered, and merely shrugged his shoulders with a short laugh which had the effect of bringing the interview to a conclusion.

"I am indeed grieved, Monsieur le Marquis," the visitor wheedled, with so abrupt a reassumption of his most persuasive shopman's manner that L^oic looked at him in astonishment, "to have bored you with this miserable affair; but be merciful, and allow me to entreat you again—should my shameless niece ever appeal to you—to refuse to see her; and, oh, Monsieur le Marquis, send her back to us under safe escort, so that we may treat her as she deserves."

This last clause was *de trop*, however, and L^oic, rising to his full height, exclaimed, his eyes fairly blazing:

"Eh! go to the devil, you and your infamous speeches; you don't know who you are talking to, Monsieur le Coiffeur, and that's where I have the advantage of you; for, of all the infamous scoundrels—" But the terrified hair-dresser had taken to his heels and was retreating precipitately down the long corridor on the way to his waiting *fiacre*, his coat-tails flying horizontally behind

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

him, his eyes almost starting from his sickly countenance, for he really fancied that he felt the wind of a well-earned kick. In a second more L^oic heard the rattle of wheels passing down the avenue at a gallop.

"Dirty little ruffian!" he muttered. "Pah! the air is fairly tainted with the reek of his presence!" And he turned on his heel, deep disgust still curling his lips. He felt, nevertheless, that the whole situation had its intensely funny side; from an observer's point of view, it would have been excruciating, but, unfortunately, he was an actor in the comedy, which fact sadly altered the humor of it. With an impatient shrug of the shoulders he marched across the hall, lifted the tapestry, pressed back the panel, and released Rose.

Silently he signed to her to follow him up a narrow side staircase and ushered her into his own rooms, where cheerful wood fires burned on every hearth and battled with their fitful brilliancy the steady glow of the shaded lamps.

"Was it my uncle?" the girl asked, in a frightened whisper, as soon as L^oic had closed the outward doors of the suite and returned to her side.

"It was," he answered, with a half smile which slowly ebbed away as he looked into Rose's livid, haggard face. "He came—and is gone. You have nothing more to fear from him—for a little while at least."

Rose sat heavily down on a small ottoman. Her attitudes were uncouth and angular and had been a perpetual source of contemptuous reproof from her gracefully serpentine mother. She now sat with both hands resting flat on her knees, staring fixedly at the leaping blue and pink flames of the drift-wood logs.

There was a long silence, during which L^oic twice noisily opened and shut his cigarette-case in order to

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

arouse her attention, but apparently she did not hear the sound, nor did she seem aware of her surroundings.

"Mademoiselle," he said at last, in a measured voice which seemed to his auditor to emphasize strangely the quiet of the room, "before we go any further I wish to ask you a question. You are at liberty to answer it or not, but upon your reply hangs my decision. It is a difficult and an unpleasant question for me to ask, and one I would willingly avoid; but will you answer it truthfully?"

Rose continued to stare into the fire, her strange, pale eyes almost fierce in their concentration, but she nodded affirmatively, and L^oic, fixing his searching gaze upon her, said slowly, as if carefully weighing every word:

"Has your uncle any real hold upon you, or are his threats empty ones? Understand, I am asking you whether—yes or no—you have in the past done something which he can now use against you—doubtless you know that parents have practically unlimited powers in France, and that the laws concerning women are severe. If he is accusing and trying to persecute a blameless girl, his threats do not count for anything; but if this is not altogether the case, then he undoubtedly can carry them into immediate execution. Now answer me frankly—and honorably."

Rose stole one swift glance at him, then her eyes returned to the fixed contemplation of the little, hissing flames. With singular rapidity she had grasped L^oic's meaning, and had realised that the truth, or part of the truth, well presented, could alone save her. He would not—that she instinctively felt—aid a hitherto pure-lived maiden to escape the pursuits of her family, be that family ever so uncongenial or even cruel. He might espouse her cause, but that, too, was not certain, whereas if she let him see how matters really stood—

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

Very slowly she rose and stood before him, her head now bowed, now raised for a pleading look—a picture of shamed confusion from which Lōic averted his gaze, but she was, in reality, desperately collected, thinking hard, gaining time.

“Is there some truth in your uncle’s accusations?” Lōic asked again, almost in a whisper.

Her inspiration came. Meeting his eyes shrinkingly, but with perfect-seeming sincerity, “You know there is, —you know there is,” she said, very low, “but—but the man is dead—died last year.”

Lōic, in spite of his experience of the world, believed her. His own falls and stumbles during twenty-one years’ journey on life’s broken road had not as yet taught him that women, even when forced to tell the truth, cannot refrain from mixing lies therewith, lies that excuse—as they fondly believe—the evil they are compelled to confess. He believed her, and even honored her for the honesty of her painful confession.

Rose longed to avoid the look of those softening gray eyes, and as she longed Lōic turned his back on her, went to where a lamp stood, and carefully consulted his watch, although, after contemplating the bland face of this costly and reliable timepiece for fully twenty seconds, he never saw the hour. Then he turned and slowly came back to her side.

“I think,” he said, quietly, “that we have not much time to lose if you are to be placed out of harm’s way to-night.”

She started violently, and grew scarlet with surprise and delight, for until this instant she had not seen one ray of hope.

“Oh!” she cried, rapturously, “then you will take pity on me—you will save me? Thank you, and thank God, who has answered my prayers!”

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

"Softly, softly!" he interrupted, by no means enjoying this sudden and overwhelming enthusiasm. "Don't thank me, please. What I am going to attempt is the outcome of circumstances with which, as you know, I had nothing to do. Circumstances," he added, more to himself than to her, "have been my masters lately. They have given me no time to consider and hardly enough to do what seemed best for the moment."

The girl was looking at him with something in her eyes that in his preoccupation he did not quite understand.

"What do you wish me to do?" she asked, in a lifeless, disappointed voice.

"I am going to find for you," he said, rousing himself, "a disguise, if possible. I think that with an ulster and a cap over some of my flannel things you may, in the dark, be able to pass for a boy. I will bring everything into this room, and then you will please lock yourself in and get ready as quickly as you can."

She nodded, and he could not help wondering what thoughts there were behind her silence; but this was no time for reflection, and he hurried off, reckoning as he went how many hours of darkness might still be vouchsafed to him.

"Oh, what a fool I am!" he angrily reflected, while ransacking his wardrobe for some wearing apparel which might be made to do for her—"a nice Squire of damsels in distress; Don Quixote himself could do no better!" He violently closed a recalcitrant drawer and, opening another containing tennis-caps and neckerchiefs, muttered, half aloud: "The best of it is that I don't care a button for that stupid little thing, and yet here I am risking everything for her sake—Gäidik's trick that, to entangle one's self gratuitously in anybody's troubles— Well,

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

on se ressemble de plus loin, and, anyhow, I cannot let that brute of an uncle get hold of her; no, I'm in for it, that's certain; but—damnation! I don't think I quite deserve it."

The sound of the wind in the caves was like the moaning of high rigging at sea. Lóic's face hardened, his teeth closed upon his under lip. "She'll be nicely sick," he continued to grumble, bundling all he had selected over his arm; "for I've got to take her away in some fishing-boat or other. There is no question of going by rail or road. Ah! it would take a woman like Gàid to face such a night cheerfully—" Gàidik again! He paused, the frown upon his face deepening suddenly. Would even the supremely unselfish Gàidik counsel him to so mad an adventure? Right before his eyes, on the high mantel-shelf, stood a miniature of her, taken in a white dress of gauze with a trail of starry clematis flung across one bare shoulder and a rope of large pearls twined in her coronal of braids. Out of that lifelike picture two clear, aquamarine-hued orbs seemed to gaze reproachfully at him. This was, indeed, a parting of the ways, where even a young fellow who has always marched through life with that recklessness of the morrow that is born of a fine unconscious courage and careless, conscious strength might be inclined to pause. Well did he know what interpretation would be put on his abduction of this girl, for whom he never could "care a button." Moreover, he clearly foresaw the effect of such an act in the present entangled state of his own affairs. It would justify his mother before all the world and substantiate all her hitherto unfounded views. And yet how could he now get out of it? The frown became a scowl as he stood in the middle of the room with his bundle of clothes, not hesitating, but quickly counting the cost of the hazardous

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

step he was about to take. With two rapid strides he returned to the chimney-piece, snatched the miniature from its gilded stand, kissed it passionately, closed the little azure velvet box-frame brusquely, and slipped it into an inside pocket. Then, with a muttered oath, he thrust into its place the letters hastily penned to Ghislain and to his own man and hastened away.

There are, in the lives of most of us, moments when we cease to be men and women, and must needs become mere human beings; times when the influence of sex disappears. Lóic had reached such a time now. He entirely forgot that Rose was a woman, and a woman who loved him, or that he was a man, and therefore subject to the influences of even such a love. She was to him just then merely a creature in danger and pain which he fancied himself called upon to help; nothing more. As for the girl herself, she could hardly be expected to realize the great charity and quixotic generosity of the man who alone stood between her and a grim fate, for the capacity for evil invariably merges at some point into incapacity for comprehending good.

XVII

The Courtier.—"What think you of the case of Benedick?"

The Chancellor.—"Think? Why, I've thought Mahomet's Paradise,
But that his life lent color to his creed,
A marvellous cynical jest! Look you, good friend,
One woman served for all mankind's undoing
Unto all time, but this poor wretch hath three
That with their love or else their hate pursue him;
And of this twain ask me not which is worse,
For I'll not tell you!"

M. M.

It was a most singular outlook, naked, uncouth, primæval, as some parts of the earth still are, and yet magnificent in its stern grandeur. The square, massive house was built on the edge of a perpendicular cliff falling a clear three hundred feet to the heaving, restless sea—a cliff, slate-hued and mica-spangled, like most Breton rocks, shading at the foot to dark bluish green, where the waves for centuries had fretted it. The extreme monotony of the scene, the gray, trackless waters, the vast immensity of the horizon, all lent silent voices to the burden of the ancient tune which the wind sang thinly along the heathery downs—that man is, indeed, but an infinitesimal and evanescent thing.

Lôic, gazing from an open window overhanging the abyss, slowly and comprehensively absorbed it all like a long, intoxicating drink, but with the hereditary calm and silent depth of enjoyment of a true son of that grim old land.

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

"What, dreaming again?" a gay, girlish voice said at his elbow, and Rose—a greatly transformed Rose, wearing a pretty wrapper the color of her name, and a lace hood over her tousled hair—cast her contemptuous and uncomprehending eyes over the boundless, superb waste. Her laugh sounded painfully light and frivolous and shallow in the silence of the ages which had brooded within the walls of this little manor since the days of Olivier de Clisson, and it seemed to grate upon Lôic, for he turned abruptly away and closed the window with a quick, impatient wrench.

"I cannot understand what you find to admire in all this desolation," she said, clasping both hands around his arm and gazing coquettishly up into his face. "What is there that pleases you in it?"

He looked down at her in a sort of wonderment; it seemed to him that no woman, be she ever so lowly born, should feel like asking such a question. Gently but with decision he disengaged his arm and sat down before a writing-table where a half-written letter lay on the blotter.

"Are you going to write, Lôic?" she said, pettishly. "Won't you come out for a walk? The weather is not very fine, of course—it never is here—but you'd like that better than staying in-doors, I'm sure!"

Lôic turned and looked at her again, but this time with a curious little smile. She made an imperceptible movement towards him, as if she expected him to say something nice—she belonged to the caressing school—but he emphatically did not, and never dealt in the exceedingly small change of continual compliment.

"I am afraid I must finish this letter," he said, gravely. It is necessary that I should find out what is doing at La Roche and also at Kergöat, but when I am through

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

we shall drive, if you like, to post it ourselves at Kergouven. It is a pity you won't learn how to sit a horse, though; driving, excepting a four-in-hand, is a bit monotonous."

"I am horribly afraid of horses," Rose muttered, with a resentful scowl which distorted her whole countenance for a second; "they are such stupid brutes."

Löic repressed a shrug of the shoulders, and without another word turned to his letter, Rose moving the while from chair to chair, from table to window, with a lack of repose which would certainly have got upon the nerves of a less self-possessed man.

He had already learned the uselessness of arguing any point with this girl, who, on her side, did not at all understand him. There was something cold, rugged, and dogged in him which made him to her an utterly incomprehensible being. A man is generally at a disadvantage in the presence of the woman who loves him, for she easily sees through him at a glance, but Rose possessed no such penetration, and Löic was and would ever remain an enigma to her. She knew how to manage him, however, by making unscrupulous use of her clinging weakness, and, in spite of all his native good sense and shrewdness, in spite of all his impatience of control, no matter how hard she strained upon this one slender string, he invariably responded.

He did not like her one whit more than when he had taken her away from Yffiniac on that stormy night six weeks before with the mere intention of placing her in safety, but he endeavored not to let her see this. He could not tell her how her silly terrors and continual sea-sickness during the trip along the coast to furthestmost Brittany had exasperated him, used as he was to so different a stamp of woman. He could not tell her that her past,

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

her birth, her looks, her habits, her complaining, pettish, "pick-me-up-or-I-die" little mannerisms made him long twenty times a day to run away from her; that the chain which now bound them together galled him often beyond endurance. No, none of these things could L^oic de Ker-g^oat, in his great generosity, tell the person whom they, after all, most concerned. His method certainly erred on the side of reticence.

Rose was bright enough—light and gay—so long as it was a question of chattering like a magpie, of donning the charming toilettes L^oic had ordered for her from Paris, and of getting herself initiated into the life of ease and luxury which had so suddenly fallen to her lot; but whenever things did not go precisely to her liking she was prone to sulk a little and vent her ennui in bitter remarks about L^oic's beloved Brittany, its hazy skies, its frequent storms, even the poetic little *Castel*, once the property of Olivier de Clisson, which he had rented, thinking, reasonably enough, that nobody would dream of looking for them in that wild region, where there were no railroads for some sixty miles.

He was feeling bitterly the fret of the aforesaid chain as he resumed his pen and glanced for a second or so from its sharp gold point to the inkstand before him. His life, taking it all in all, had been hitherto no great success, but he wondered just then whether any or all of it had ever been as bad as this. "You will be a weak fool, will you?" his inward self demanded. "Why didn't you at least stick to your original programme?" At last he slowly dipped the pen into the ink, but instead of resuming his letter he began to draw a race-horse and jockey on the blotting-pad, doing this with elaborate care and attention. Beneath the window a deep-voiced Picardy wolf-hound was baying nervously and intermittently at

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

the gently advancing twilight. L^oic dropped his pen and looked at his watch.

"Go and dress, Rose," he said. "I shall be ready for a walk in ten minutes; my letter can wait till to-morrow."

"It would be worse—much worse," he muttered to himself when she had gone, "if I loved her; so, I am much better able to do the right thing by her." All the man was revealed in that one sentence.

He was leaning one hand and arm on the mantel-piece, looking thoughtfully into the fire, when the rustle of silk made him turn his head, and Rose, beautifully dressed, rushed in with a frightened face.

"There is a carriage coming up the causeway!" she stammered. "I saw it from my window; and oh, L^oic, there are a couple of gendarmes riding beside it!" And she threw herself upon him, her chin quivering, her eyes dilated with terror.

Through the open doorway appeared the startled faces of a couple of servants who had also seen the disquieting cavalcade—gendarmes are invariably the stormy petrels of misfortune and of shame in the provinces.

For the merest fraction of a minute L^oic stood listening; then, disengaging himself from Rose's convulsively clinging arms, he said, quietly: "I must go and see what it is. Whatever happens, stay here till I come back." And he was turning to leave the room when the clink of spurs sounded outside and he was confronted upon the threshold by a *brigadier de gendarmerie* and a cloaked and veiled woman.

The woman pointed very dramatically towards the cowering figure of Rose, and in a voice ludicrously tragic, exclaimed:

"That is my daughter, Brigadier. Apprehend her!"

L^oic, his hands in his pockets, was calmly surveying

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

the scene. He knew that he was trapped, that no power on earth could prevent the law from now taking its course. He had abducted a minor and must bear the consequences; indeed, the only thing which surprised him was that Madame Billot should not have bidden the gendarme to "apprehend" him first; but this she evidently did not wish done, for the "brigadier" turned obsequiously to him with muttered excuses as he advanced towards Rose.

"Listen to me," Lóic said, speaking very distinctly. "I am the Marquis de Kergoat, and if you lay a hand on that young lady I will make you sorry for it."

The officer drew back a pace; he had met the eyes of Lóic, and that one look was enough for him; but Madame Billot, perceiving his hesitation, cried, in shrill excitement: "I call upon you to arrest my daughter, Rose Billot, a minor, whom we find here living in a state of concubinage. Do your duty! You have your orders from the Préfecture."

The brigadier winced; his duty was clear, of course, and again he advanced a step, but Lóic had forestalled him. Bending down, he took hold of both Rose's hands and lifted her from the seat where she crouched. "Don't resist; it is useless," he whispered, quickly. "I won't forsake you. Be brave!" And with a sort of stern gentleness he touched her cheek with his lips before stepping back as if in formal surrender to the law. Then Rose stood up, and, opening her white lips, she cursed her mother.

Madame Billot, lifting her gloved hands to her veil, pushed it up on her scarlet, furious face, and cried out, fiercely, "Take her down to the carriage!" Then, turning to Lóic, she said, witheringly, "You can thank God that I still love you too well to have you arrested also!"

For a second she stood close to him, looking straight into his eyes with an expression which Messalina might

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

have envied her; then, without another word, she followed her daughter and the gendarme out of the room.

* * * * *

Half an hour later Lôic heard the gravel beneath his windows grate under the light hoofs of a thorough-bred horse and the slow tread of a stableman. Quickly he slipped on his gloves, walked down-stairs, and prepared to mount, his face showing white and set as a flint in the moonlight. He slipped two fingers beneath the girths, gave a preliminary tug at the stirrup-leathers, and then turned to the groom.

"I have," he said, "given orders that everything here should remain as it is until my return. Take good care of the carriage-horses."

Then he vaulted into the saddle cowboy fashion, whistled to his hound to follow him, and vanished at a sharp pace into the moonlit haze rising from the sea. The sound of the eager horse's flighty, unsteady trot upon the crisp night air was soon followed by an even thud, thud, thud, in regular rhythmical cadence, as the animal settled to its work, and almost immediately a vague sense of peace began to take the place of the anger which, until then, had raged in its rider's mind.

The great, sombre heath lay silent beneath the starry sky; the subtle fragrance of bracken and brine mingled with the cold breath of the night and braced him by its tonic strength; the familiar creak of saddle and bridle, the slight jingle of the snaffle-rings, had a delightful sense of something found again, and he turned his head to call out almost gayly to the shaggy hound who, with ears well set back, was galloping behind him, "Come along, Teuss,* we've got no time to lose."

* Breton for "Devil." Pronounced Toyce.

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

At the end of the steep, mile-long causeway spanning the rocky, narrow valley, which, like a California cañon, separates the manor cliffs from another ridge quite as rugged and forbidding, Lōic checked his horse and took a long look at the fortress-like house where he had spent six of the most colorless and insipid weeks of his whole life, and experienced one of its most exasperating humiliations.

"It always ends with me," he said, aloud, to the justly surprised Teuss, who, sitting in dignified bolt-uprightness beside his horse, deferentially cocked one ear to listen to this sapient remark—"it always ends with me, by my discovering how great a fool I really can be when I try!"

Teuss gravely inclined his intelligent head to one side as if too polite to contradict, although there might be in his canine opinion something to argue against so severe a self-criticism, and as no further remark was addressed to him he allowed his pink tongue to hang from the leeward of his mouth, as is the custom of his tribe to do after running fast. He was a shrewd, but rather distant and haughty, dog of very formidable appearance, who had but lately become Lōic's property, which fact did not, however, prevent them from already loving and understanding each other perfectly, for they both possessed, in an almost equal degree and in spite of their grim and fierce occasional angers, wofully affectionate hearts.

A sudden thought, however, made Lōic at this juncture brutally tighten his grip on the reins and sent the three night-travellers, man, horse, and dog, down the steep descent of the ridge at a most imprudent pace. How was it that it should not have occurred to him sooner? Surely Madame Billot had not financed the long and expensive search which had resulted in Rose's capture. Was it, then, the Marquise de Kergoat who, through

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

Rivier, had furnished the money for that amiable enterprise? A violent anger—just such an unreasoning, ferocious one as could at any instant animate the huge dog now tearing along at his side—rose up in Loïc, a very frenzy of passion, which made him bite his lips until the taste of blood in his mouth made him realize that he was once again putting his foolishness to the proof. Also the speed at which he was going, and the mighty rush of salt wind he was cutting through, helped him to recover his *sang-froid*, and by the time he had reached the plain he was again quite calm, but of a calmness more dangerous even than his previous rage. The plot of which he had been the object seemed to him peculiarly vile, and as he rode along at a steadier pace throughout the dark, velvety night he made up his mind that the time had now come for him to show what sort of a risk there might be in attacking him thus underhandedly.

It was six o'clock in the morning when he reached the little town of Kernolé, situated some thirty miles from the coast; that, with its huddle of roofs and spires within the massive circuit of a towered and crenellated wall, presented a most poetic reminder

“Of old, unhappy, far-off things, and battles long ago.”

The tiny burgh was already wide-awake when his horse's hoofs clattered through the grinning barbican into its narrow main street, for it was market-day, and the pavement was thronged with peasants dressed in their gorgeously brodered fête clothes. Women carrying baskets of eggs, fruit, or vegetables turned to peep beneath their nunlike *coiffes* at the solitary horseman, and thought he had ridden in to attend the great semiannual horse-fair that was filling the western ramparts with a continuous trampling of feet and a harsh clamor of bartering voices;

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

children scurried away before the long, supple, untiring lope of Teuss; and finally Lōic reached the hotel, where he devoted forty minutes to his horse's welfare. He was not the man to trust this plucky animal to the tender mercies of a stupid-looking hostler, and, much to that dignitary's surprise, threw off his coat and took to rubbing down the lathered flanks with a vigor quite unimpaired by a whole night in the saddle.

When, after splashing about in newly drawn well-water for a few minutes, and swallowing a cup of coffee and a slice or two of brown bread and butter, he lighted a cigarette and sauntered out, he gazed in amusement at the open market-square, hard with the tread of many *sabots*, which fronted the hostelry.

Kernolé is an epitome of many centuries of history, an enduring monument of the fierce wars which convulsed Brittany in the days of De Montfort and Charles of Blois. Many of Lōic's doughty warrior-ancestors had defended the stout walls of this little stronghold from English or French assault, and it has retained from those heroic times an enduring expression of proud and forbidding strength. Even its grass-grown ramparts, skirted by the now peaceful waters of the moat—where silvery lilies and delicate reeds thrive marvellously—give no impression of disarmament, but rather seem still a living, breathing tribute to the struggles that have been, drowsing merely in rusty harness, but still ready to awaken fully prepared to meet any emergency, any welcome rumor of war.

Lōic passed slowly down the *Place*, which to-day was studded with small booths made of four boards and a few armfuls of fragrant pine branches, waving softly in the breeze with a shadowy, forest effect. A sharp smell of fresh vegetables and smoked fish and meats filled the

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

air, and a veritable babel of voices testified to the ardor of the traffic now in progress. Everywhere broad-winged *coiffes* came floating, like flocks of great, slow birds, down all the little tortuous streets converging towards the market, an occasional golden sun-ray threading the duskiness of the ancient eaves, making the rich masses of the corsage embroideries or the silver buckles of the men's broad-leafed hats sparkle like diamond-dust.

On the low wall encircling the *Halle aux Blés* groups of women were perched, knitting industriously, laughing softly, and whispering to one another while awaiting the return of their lords and masters, engaged in buying or selling the sturdy little thick-maned ponies or the taller, more powerful draught-horses which are the principal source of revenue of that part of the country.

Smoking still, Lœic walked on, much diverted by the remarks in Breton which his approach attracted. The men and women of Kernolé, like the rest of the population of Basse-Bretagne, hate strangers, and show a very unamiable front to the hapless "Franc" or "Angliche" who, in an imprudent moment, wanders into their midst; but, notwithstanding his very un-Breton attire, Lœic was instantly recognized as "one of our Seigneurs," and so the remarks murmured to the click of the knitting-needles were dutiful, flattering, innocent, and gentle, not coarse and offensive as they would otherwise have been. There were faces as pure and proud as that of a *Vierge de Missel* among the groups upon the wall, but, had Lœic been a "stranger," the clear blue eyes would have instantly scowled fiercely at him, and contempt and defiance would have distorted the pretty, level lips, now so smilingly revealing rows of pearly teeth. On and on walked Lœic until he reached the horse-fair outside the

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

west gate of the town. There the row of high-gabled houses overtopping the machicolated walls amid a foam of verdure and of winter-flowering clematis fronted on one side the wide space where file after file of horses surged and swayed, and *Maquignons*, with long blue or white blouses covering their holiday garb, cursed and heaped invectives upon one another, or grappled bodily when the causes of disagreement could not be amended by mere tongue-lashings. The buying and selling and chaffering went steadily on, and above the rough cries and well-rounded oaths the shrill whines of two *Bignious* could be heard, blown energetically by a couple of obstinate *Sonneurs*, who heeded not at all the turmoil surrounding the high *estrade* where they had ensconced themselves, and upon which they vigorously stamped their feet in time to the weird *ronde* they played.

Lôic laughed, his good-humor entirely restored. This was his own country, in all the savagery of its mediæval beauty, and he loved it just as it was, with all its faults, all its grandeurs, all its stubborn ferocities and ignorances. These were men, not puppets, who quarrelled there around him; women, not dolls, these wives, sisters, daughters, and mothers of horse-breeders, farmers, and hill-men, who, amid the drunkenness, brutality, and brawls which surround them from the cradle to the grave manage to preserve intact their touching faiths and strict, almost Puritanical morality, their feminine modesty, and their faultless honesty. Thank God they were not of the Billot tribe, nor of that of the modern "bachelor girl," who deems herself fully entitled to most of the privileges and liberties formerly monopolized by the stronger sex. His eyes were very tender as he let them rest upon the great horse-market—this corner of Brittany as supreme in influence and interest to the whole country-

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

side as the *Bourse* of Paris is to the capitalists and speculators of France.

The tempers ran high, however, that morning, and two very angry men were apostrophizing the musicians, bidding them in no measured language to "hold their row" until the irate ones had settled a little difference of opinion concerning the price of a pair of trotters. The "artists," naturally much offended, retaliated forthwith—interrupting their *ronde* in the very middle of a note to launch a magnificent duet of curses upon the gentlemen below. Back and forth the tall denunciations flew—"deceased pig," "*kigagn*" (mangy dog), and "*bas-dotu*" (deformed devil) being the very smallest change of these amenities—until suddenly a long and supple whip-lash, wielded by a masterly hand, came hissing up from beneath across the shoulders of both *Sonneurs*. This, to be sure, demanded instant punishment, and, throwing their dolefully wheezing *Bignious* upon the boards of their *estrade*, the musicians caught up the two massive bottles of *calvados* prepared for their half-hourly refreshment, and started to cut their opponents to pieces with these ghastly weapons.

Convinced that there was now nothing less than murder in the air—he knew his people, this young Breton Chieftain—*Lôic*, thrusting the ring of by-standers right and left, leaped upon the two threatened horse-dealers, seized one in each hand, and hurled them like a couple of bundles at the heads of the crouching musicians. The first accomplished a clear somersault into the very heart of the crowd beyond, but the second landed fairly, and men, *Bignious*, bottles, and *estrade* came down together with a mighty crash in an inextricable tangle of wildly waving arms and legs.

A roar of delight rose from the jostling throng like an

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

unfurling wave, for this simple form of justice distinctly appealed to them. It was the only one to which they felt that respectful attention was due. *La raison du plus fort* is greatly appreciated throughout Brittany, and its present excellent rendering was instantly followed by an immediate cessation of hostilities.

"Sacred animals!" Lœic said, with naïve satisfaction; "you must always be fighting about something or other!" And at that moment a tall, splendid old man, clad in peasant's garb, stepped forward and stood shoulder to shoulder with him.

"Serves you right, you blockheads!" he called out, in stentorian tones, and added to the by-standers, "Go and pick up the débris!" He towered a full head above the crowd, and there was a flash of quiet domination in his still, bright-blue eyes. Everybody within hearing flew to do his bidding, setting the viciously snarling quartette of brawlers on their respective feet, picking up, with praiseworthy promptitude, the overturned *estrade*, the *Bignious*, and what remained of the bottles, amid jeers and shouts of laughter.

"Monsieur de Kerdougaszt," Lœic exclaimed, delightedly, both hands out stretched, "at last I have the opportunity of seeing you again!"

"So it is indeed you, Lœic? I thought I recognized the Kergôat grip when you threw those fellows at each other's heads," the old man exclaimed, smiling his appreciation; then, in what Lœic thought the most touchingly apologetic way in the world, he continued: "You do not mind my still calling you Lœic, do you? I have so much joy in meeting you here!"

He spoke with a fine simplicity, his delicately wrinkled face extraordinarily brilliant, his height and supremely noble carriage making him a most striking figure even in

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

the midst of this gathering of remarkably fine men and handsome women.

"Pray, do not speak like that," L^oic entreated. "You cannot imagine, Sir, how glad I am to see you, and how deeply grateful I am for your friendship." And, linking his arm in that of the old peasant-Marquis, he drew him away, adding: "Let us get out of this. I feel like a professional pugilist or some other theatrical person of that sort."

"Good Heavens! I wish I were still as strong as that! I would sit up in bed at night to glory in my prowess, and kneel down twenty times a day to thank God for it."

"No, you wouldn't," L^oic answered, with a hearty laugh. "You would very likely dislike the temptation to fight that it affords one, especially if it meant making such a fool of one's self as I do only too often."

The old man shrugged his shoulders. "Then you should not live in this corner of the world, my boy. Strength, I tell you, L^oic, covers most sins in Brittany and insures forgiveness for them all."

"*A la force du poing!*" L^oic laughed.

"Exactly so. But to speak of something that greatly interests me. What have you been doing during the years of your absence?"

"Not much good," the young man replied, frankly, but turning his eyes away.

Monsieur de Kerdougaszt bent slightly forward and looked keenly into his companion's face. "I've got no great admiration for humanity," he said, quietly; "a very little association with it contents me, as a rule, but somehow or other I feel certain that there is, and never will be, any serious evil in you."

L^oic was walking stubbornly along, his eyes still averted. He flushed with pleasure at the old man's tone.

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

"That," he declared, "is the best and most encouraging thing I have heard for a very long time. The fact is that I've made rather a mess of everything until now. I wish I had seen more of you, Monsieur de Kerdougaszt. You make life look different by a single touch of your hand."

The old Marquis bowed his silvered head gravely. He was not looking at L^oic now, but at the delicious pattern made by a net-work of sun-rays that fell through overhanging greenery upon the waters of the moat beneath the battlements, whither they had slowly strolled. Then suddenly he said, with entire simplicity:

"I am a half-civilized, obstinate old Breton, L^oic, and am, I fear, sometimes guilty of unpardonable rudeness—no, let me say on! A year ago I met by chance your mother. She was then in a very imbibtered mood, and she said many things which pained and hurt me concerning you and that adorable little creature, your sister."

He paused, and L^oic stood speechless before him. What was there for him to say?

"I heard her out," the old Nobleman continued, with bitterness; "and then, L^oic, I told her what was on my mind. I refuted her statements—can a man refute a statement he has not had the patience to hear? I had barely had that patience, but it was all my stock. I am afraid that I was very rough, very harsh. I am a great child when I defend those I love, and—believe me if you will—I am capable of being aroused to a very high pitch of fury. Immediately afterwards, Madame de Kergoat made evident and amiable efforts to restore the friendly tone which—well—never existed between us; but she had sorely wounded this old savage"—and he tapped himself softly on the breast—"so that her efforts were vain. Later on I regretted my outspokenness. I swore to make amends, and that is why I tell you all this now,

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

Lôic, also because your mother, in spite of the unconventionality and cruelty of her denunciations betrayed in every word of them a passionate love for you, a love which, wise or unwise, cannot be denied, and which you must always remember and be grateful for. Her greatest weakness is jealousy—it is jealousy which has caused all your differences—and jealousy is the natural consequence of love.”

The charm of these words was irresistible, and Lôic, deeply touched, responded to the mood that had dictated them.

“Will you come and breakfast with me, Monsieur de Kerdougaszt?” he said, almost timidly. “I would like to tell you a great many things. Won’t you come, Sir?”

If any one ever quite understood Lôic—always excepting Gäidik—it was the old Marquis, as, some three hours later, he saw the lad set off again on his journey towards the railroad.

“He has been born a thousand years too late,” he mused, as, leaning on his *pen-bas*,* he watched the handsome boy and the handsome horse and dog disappear within the dark, cavernous gateway of the old town wall. “Yes, he does not fit in this modern age at all. In the earlier days his daring, his combativeness, his magnificent courage and obstinacy would have sent him off at the head of our Bretons in search of fabulous victories, and his deeds would have been sung by bards and sounded down the centuries in Celtic banquet-halls; but these times dwarf and bewilder him. The Saints bless and preserve

* The long staff universally carried by the peasantry, made of blackthorn or some other hard wood. Knotted at both ends, which are sometimes additionally hardened in the fire, it is a very effective and dangerous weapon.

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

the boy," he concluded, almost aloud, his arms outstretched in infinite benediction, his face full of a great pity, and then, with a sigh, he hurried wearily away to the despatch of the affairs which had brought him for once so far from his old, ruined home.

XVIII

Broad sea! broad sea! and afar they haste
Though suns set dark with a menace dire,
Or soft Night pioneers the waste
With trails of lambent fire.
High Lords are they of the wind and tide,
And who doth reck in his strength and pride
The deadly draw of the viewless drift
That hath such mastery as a gift?
Oh, sing of the lookout gazing now
From the lift and plunge of the cleaving prow!
And cry with the sea-fowl swift and free
On the wallowing waves,
Broad sea!

The Voyage, III.—M. M.

“AND are you sure of what you say?”

“Absolutely certain.”

The Comtesse de Brielle bent her beautiful old head in order to hide the tears that rose to her eyes, tears which she would have been cruelly ashamed to betray even to her favorite brother.

“You see, Elizabeth,” Count René continued, in a low-pitched, concentrated voice, “it was bound to happen. Geneviève would take no advice save occasionally from that brother of hers, who has always hated Lōic—his antithesis in every respect.”

The Countess's still extraordinarily fresh lips were pressed close together.

“Is there nothing we can do?” she asked at last, rather piteously.

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

"I'm no great diplomat, and I never had any aptitude for toadying or being patronized, which is the A B C of all dealings with Geneviève," he replied, bitterly. "No, I am afraid, Elizabeth, that we can do nothing."

"Go and tackle L^oic himself, then," she suggested. "Surely you have not lost all influence over him."

"That again is impossible," he retorted. "I did my best after his return from Brittany when I saw him here in Paris. I am a man, and a remarkably tough one, but I got a lesson then, nevertheless."

"What was the lesson?" she asked.

"Well, since you care to know, it was this. After hedging a good deal, L^oic finally made a clean breast of the whole matter."

"Confessed about the abduction of the girl?" she interrupted.

"Pshaw, my dear, don't use such tall words. If abduction there was, it was he who was abducted. I am an average moral man, I take it, and a pretty good Catholic, but I cannot find it in my heart to utterly condemn him for doing what was, after all, only an idiotically chivalrous thing."

"You surprise me!"

"Hear me out, if you please. You wished to know, remember, and I'm about to tell you briefly how matters stand, although, in my opinion, such tales are not improved by the telling. The girl fled to him at night, pursued by a vile little reptile of an uncle, who was determined to incarcerate her in some provincial St. Lazare, whereupon he took her away by sea to northern Brittany."

"But does he love her, then?" Madame de Brielle asked, in astonishment.

"No, not in the least; on—on the contrary—which is the most marvellous part of the story. He does not and

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

never did love her. It seems that the good God has still a little room here below for simple-hearted fools. No; he burdened himself with her out of sheer pity; that's Lōic in—well—in all the magnificence of his imbecility, if you'll agree to put it that way."

"I don't agree."

"Very well, then. Let me finish. They had lived there for six or seven weeks in absolute solitude when the girl's mother arrived, accompanied by gendarmes, if you please, and, after indulging in a highly dramatic scene, bore her daughter away, making, as one might say, a gift to Lōic of his own liberty."

"Good Heavens, didn't she try to blackmail him? The occasion was propitious."

"Not in the least; she played her rôle of indignant parent to perfection. But now comes the climax. Who do you suppose paid the score for this effective dénouement?"

"Not Geneviève?" Madame de Brielle cried, starting to her feet with the first thoroughly undignified motion she had ever been guilty of. "Not Geneviève?"

"Yes, Geneviève! I assure you, Elizabeth, I do not like all this, especially as our dear sister-in-law employed as her agent the brother of that fellow Rivier whom I dismissed from Kergoat for gross immorality and misconduct some years ago, and who has lately succeeded in reingratiating himself with her. I know the man; he is a damned scoundrel—pardon the adjective—who would sell his immortal soul, if he could get a bid for it. He also hates Lōic, especially since your quick-fisted nephew threw him down-stairs when he came, sent by Geneviève, to remonstrate with him at La-Roche."

"He came to re-mon-strate with Lōic?"

"He did, and got for his pains only a tenth part of

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

what he deserved. It was he who served as go-between later on, and I assure you that when Lœic, who at first had wrapped himself in obstinate reticence, came to this portion of the narrative, he lost every vestige of his celebrated self-control. You'd have thought the boy was possessed. It was a regular Kergoat rage, let me tell you. Well, to conclude, he came away from Finisterre vowing vengeance upon everybody, even his mother, but at Kernolé he met Kerdougaszt—you remember him; he is a remarkable old fellow—a marvel in these days of—”

“Yes! yes! Go on, go on, Réné!”

“As you will. He told everything to Kerdougaszt, who spoke so wisely to him that he managed to save us all from an open scandal, and Geneviève from a final break with her son. Lœic reached Kergoat in a tamed and softened mood, conscious that his conduct had, from his mother's point of view, been pretty bad, and quite ready, therefore, to forgive and be forgiven. So, if Geneviève had only—”

The Countess was leaning forward, staring with haggard eyes at her brother. “Geneviève!” she exclaimed. “Ah! I have done with her; she is—oh, never mind what she is—but tell me, did she refuse to accept his apologies?”

“Yes. There were doings, it seems. At any rate, Lœic flew off again in a paroxysm of fury equal to her own, came here to Paris, and is now going to the dogs as fast as he can.”

There was a long silence in the exquisite little museum of souvenirs, personal and historical, which the Countess de Brielle called her boudoir, while she, magnificent in pansy velvet and diamonds—she was going, later on, to a ball at the Austrian Embassy—paced up and down to control her indignant agitation.

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

"Do you know," she said at last, stopping in front of her brother—"do you know that there is only one person in the world who could check him?"

"Yes, I know—Gáidik; but she's thousands of miles away, and has enough of her own troubles, poor child, so she is quite out of the question; moreover, even she would find it no small task to make him hear reason now. He has taken the bit between his teeth and is going a tremendous pace. Happily his income is a big one; but even that cannot suffice him at the present rate. Race-horses, steam-yachts, and — other less innocent amusements cost something."

"What possesses him?"

"I don't know. There is more here than meets the eye. If at least I were certain that he is quite rid of the Billots, but that is impossible to assert."

"Rid of the Billots! You don't mean to tell me, René, that there is still danger in that direction?"

"I am afraid so. Lóic declared to me that he will always consider himself responsible for the girl's welfare. He has received no communication from her so far, save a short letter which he believes to have been dictated to her, and in which she declares herself reconciled to her fate. On the other hand, Ghislain d'Yffiniac, who, since his uncle's stroke of paralysis, has been staying with him at La-Roche, has written to say that she is living, as before, at her uncle's shop; but somehow or other I don't feel at ease, in spite of these favorable circumstances. That girl will not, if she can help it, lose her chance of casting a grapple upon him again. Remember what I tell you to-night, Elizabeth—we have not yet reached the end of all this, and with a nature like Lóic's one never knows what is to come next."

Had Count René but known it, this sad prophecy was

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

at that very moment being fulfilled in a singularly startling fashion.

The winter in Paris that year happened to be a more than usually gay one, and among the gayest and most reckless was—as his uncle had stated—the young Marquis de Kergoat. He lived alone in a magnificent apartment on the Avenue des Champs Elysées, although his mother, tormented by one of her periodical fits of remorse, had opened her splendid *Hôtel* in the Faubourg St. Germain, and would have given much to see him consent to take up his quarters there. This he absolutely refused to do, just as he had refused to occupy, even for one night, his rooms at Kergoat on the occasion of his last interview, taking up his quarters instead at the "bachelor pavilion" in the park. He appeared to be suffering from an insatiable thirst for continual change and novelty. He had purchased *en bloc*, from a ruined acquaintance, a superb racing-stud, and backed his own horses heavily at Chantilly or La Marche; he rode steeplechases, danced, flirted, gave sumptuous entertainments, and had, in a few short weeks, become the rage to such an extent that no fête was considered perfect which he did not grace by his presence. Before him stretched an incessantly varying kaleidoscope of amusements and pleasures, when, on the night mentioned, he was suddenly pulled up in that easy, swinging gallop by the cruelly weak hand of a woman whom he did not love and who was not worthy of one glance from his eyes.

He had been dining with some friends at his club and was later to meet them again at that very ball in honor of which his aunt had donned a portion of her historic diamonds. He had not heard again from Rose, and here no news was distinctly good news. No fresh complication was to be feared now, he felt certain, since the girl



THE "BACHELOR'S PAVILION" IN THE PARK AT
KERGOAT

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

was safe at La-Roche, and yet, in spite of all this, Løic had a singular presage of disaster weighing upon him.

When leaving the club he sent away his carriage, preferring to walk home, for the night was one of fine and moonlit beauty. The air was brisk with the cleanly smell of a light frost, and the neat, exquisitely swept boulevards, flooded with the silvery light from above, commingling with that of the interminable cordons of electric lamps shining white beneath the still leafless trees, were tempting for pedestrians. He walked slowly along, picturing to himself what this same hour was like at Kergoat. The sea lay level before him, shining gloriously under the moon—shining, too, were the ivy-mantled walls of the château and Gaidik's broad balcony—the gulls' feeding-place. A faint odor, compounded of a fragrance as of violets from the salt-marshes, of bruised sea-weed, peat fires, and the great cedars in the park, was in his nostrils, and calm serenity smiled at him from the time-toned grays and storm-washed duskiness of the towering cliffs. Truly the whole scene had the vividness of reality, and as he viewed it bitter regret surged up in him. Between him and the past there seemed all at once to rise a grim barrier, and he felt suddenly as if the future were never again to be what the past had been. With an impatient exclamation—which made a *sergent-de-ville* turn and look suspiciously at him—he fell into a more rapid step and reached his house in no very gay mood.

Letting himself in with his latch-key, he did not at once summon his valet, but walked into his study, where the very first thing that caught his eyes beneath the circle of light from a reading-lamp on the desk was a thick letter addressed in rather unformed, angular characters traced in violet ink. For a moment Løic stood looking

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

at it blankly, and as if almost fearing to touch it; then brusquely he took it up and tore it open. His hands trembled a very little as he turned page after page, and when he had finished he sat down wearily, and with one finger began polishing one of the silver corners holding in place the pale-blue blotting-paper of the writing-pad. The action was that of a child attempting to conjure away some of the tedium of a hard lesson by playing with what comes nearest to hand. His head was bent over the bright corner-piece as if he were lamentably short-sighted and wished to give the greatest possible attention to a difficult task, and it was only when he had kept up the regular motion of his finger for fully five minutes that he raised his eyes and looked somewhat vacantly at the orderly array around the blotter, the gold-and-jade pen-holders in their separate trays, the pencils, well-sharpened and neat, ranged carefully upon the rungs of a quaint little bronze ladder, the ink-erasers, and many-colored sticks of sealing-wax lying in the bowl of a small antique lamp, and finally at the huge bouquet of violets against which leaned Gäidik's miniature—the one he had brought away in his pocket from Yffiniac on the night of his flight with Rose.

All this just then seemed to have a hypnotic fascination for him, but the detailed examination of his writing-table brought him apparently no nearer to the solution of the bitter problem evolved by that fateful letter, for he suddenly rose and began to pace up and down the long room with the regularity of a ship's commander on his quarter-deck.

The shock which he had just received was for the moment disabling, for in it seemed embodied all the brooding, the regrets, the dull, vague apprehensions of the last hour, and it took him a little while before he could ex-

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

amine the situation in all its new aspects and wellnigh insurmountable difficulties. So Rose claimed his immediate help! She was again being grossly maltreated, and that at a moment when women possessing a legitimate claim upon the man they love are surrounded with more than usual care and devotion. Had he, L^oic, suspected that the weeks of his imbecile surrender to her imploring passion had had such a result, he would not, cost what it might, have left her a moment in the hands of her mother and uncle—that thought alone would have made her sacred to him—and yet at that thought the whole world turned to a veritable hell around him. He felt like a man in the resistless swing of a whirlpool, and a boundless rage against himself boiled up within him, mixed with a profound anguish of suspicion and distrust.

What if it was untrue? Was Rose at that very minute, perhaps, smiling to herself at the simplicity of the trap which she had set for him? Would he not be an idiot, and worse than an idiot, if he took this bait like some silly, staring fish? Why should he believe her on evidence of so diaphanous a kind, why take her word, the word of a woman trying by every means to reconquer her lost lover, clinging desperately to a last flimsy chance? Yet she might be telling the truth, after all, poor little wretched girl, not yet eighteen, who was face to face with the greatest pain, the greatest joy of womanhood, and who implored him, her only friend, her only hope, to rescue her before it was too late.

At intervals of seemingly incalculable length he heard the clock on the mantel-piece ring the hours and half-hours, and but for that and the slow crumbling of the logs on the hearth he could well have believed that time had ceased. A temporary death and stagnation filled the big room, into which no sound penetrated save the

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

muffled rumbling of carriage-wheels from the avenue below. But the intolerable fret of irresolution was slowly passing away, and out of the dense mist of doubt and of vacillation, duty—as he considered it—duty to a helpless woman, to an unborn child, dimly shaped itself and defined itself gradually before him in all its implacable severity of outline. It moved at a very slow pace towards him, this stern figure of duty, but, nevertheless, it reached him at last and laid a heavy hand on his shoulder. The hour for action had come.

One last turn up and down the room, one weary sigh wrung from him by a last struggle, and calmly, deliberately he returned to his writing-table and sat down before it.

“No, Gäidik,” he murmured, drawing the violets resolutely forward so as to hide the reproachful eyes of the miniature, “I must not look at you to-night. I don’t want to think of you even!” Then pulling towards him a sheet of paper, he wrote, rapidly:

“Be in the shop next Monday afternoon without fail.”

This he neither signed nor addressed, but, folding it into as small a volume as possible, he rang for his valet.

Robin perceptibly started when he entered the room and looked at his master, but Lóic did not take any note of this, and, rising, said as quietly as if giving an everyday order:

“Robin, I want you to do me a rather peculiar service. It is necessary that you should start by the early train for La-Roche-Sur-Yon. Things of the most serious importance depend upon your doing exactly what I tell you. As soon as you arrive, go to the *Parfumerie Lierre*—but here; stop a moment; tell me first, do either M. Lierre himself or his sister, Madame Billot, know you?”

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

"No, Monsieur le Marquis. During Monsieur le Marquis's stay at Monsieur le Marquis d'Yffiniac's I never once entered that shop, and although I know Monsieur Lierre and Madame Billot by sight, I do not think that they know me. Mademoiselle Rose alone—"

"Very good. I trust to your cleverness to approach Mademoiselle Rose when and as best you can. It would perhaps be wiser for you not to go to the shop, but of that you alone can be judge. You must contrive to give her this slip of paper without being detected. If it so happens that you can speak to her, tell her not to worry, and that I shall come for her on Monday afternoon. Nothing more; but even that is not necessary, for she will understand, I dare say, without explanations. As soon as you have done this come back here immediately. Also, do not forget that one indiscreet word on your part would irretrievably ruin me and cause no end of unfortunate complications, perhaps even something much graver, but I know that I can trust you."

The man's honest face grew red with pleasure, his mouth broadened into a smile.

"I think so, too, Monsieur Lōic," he said, his mind suddenly reverting to old days when he and his young master had been boys together and playfellows at Kergōat.

"Good lad!" Lōic said, smiling too. "Go and get some sleep; it is very late, and the Austrian Embassy will have to do without me to-night. Ah! this is for you, too, Robin," and he handed him some money. "Good-night. Yes, your hand, old fellow; you are the only friend I can rely upon just now, God help me!" and he turned brusquely away.

Robin literally adored Lōic and knew him far too well not to understand that this was not a mere errand of

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

gallantry upon which he was being sent. With his usual noiseless rapidity he crossed the room, entered his master's bedchamber, removed the clothes lying in readiness there and in the adjoining dressing-room, turned down the lights, and disappeared through a door leading to an inner hall. His faithful heart was heavy within him, although pleasure and pride in seeing himself so implicitly trusted made his pulses beat high.

"Lord, I should like to have a go at that hair-dresser fellow!" he muttered to himself as he proceeded to make his few preparations for the journey. "I wish he and his precious sister and Mamzelle Rose were all three at the bottom of the sea. They're a bad lot, and will do for Monsieur Loïc between them before all is said and done!"

These bellicose feelings did not, however, prevent him from accomplishing his mission with the tact and cleverness of a diplomat, and even his bitter resentment was somewhat melted when he at last came face to face with Rose.

The girl was literally reduced to nothing. Always thin, she was now absolutely skin and bone, and her eyes, in spite of the little painful droop of the eyelids, looked owlishly enormous in her dead-white face. They had, moreover, an expression which would have conveyed to the slowest brain the idea that this girl dreaded to wake up in the morning, and consequently slept very little, if at all. Robin was not a particularly sensitive or imaginative youth, and yet he was softened more than he quite realized by the sight of her woe-begone expression.

She was fortunately alone in the shop when, after vainly trying to encounter her outside, he finally came lounging in, his soft felt travelling-hat pulled well down over his eyes, and, the day being cold, his coat-collar turned up as far as it would go. Her mother, uncle, and

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

sister were eating their early dinner in the back shop, from whence they could watch her easily, but they were not quite within ear-shot, and, having fallen into one of their eternal quarrels, failed at first to notice his entrance.

The fading light of a gloomy afternoon was fully reflected on the girl's face as she stood behind the counter dusting some bottles of perfume, and Robin, leaning against the show-case separating them, looked keenly at her.

"I have something here for you from Paris," he said, in a low voice, and quickly, deftly, he slipped the folded paper Lœic had given him into her hand.

She snatched it with a little gasp of surprise, and turned, if possible, yet paler, every vestige of color leaving even her lips; then she gave a terrified look over her shoulder at the group next door sitting around the table.

"You are not to worry," Robin continued, in a monotonous, carefully subdued tone. "Do as that paper tells you and all will be well."

"Who's that?" called out the uncle's grating voice.

"A gentleman who wants some of your *Essence de Lierre!*" Rose answered, with surprising presence of mind, rattling the flacons in front of her.

"Yes, please, two flacons," Robin said, aloud, catching the spirit of the affair and pulling some money from his pocket with a cheerful jingle of coins. "Your hands are trembling," he whispered, "and your mother is looking this way—also your sister; don't wrap them up"; and, thrusting the two little brilliantly gilded bottles into his capacious pocket, he murmured, as he turned to go, "Remember, Monsieur Lœic will be here Monday," and was gone.

Rose had opened her lips to speak, but pulled herself hurriedly together and looked carelessly away from

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

Robin's retreating form, for there, peering stealthily into the shop round the door-jamb of the inner room and barely visible in the shadow, was Monsieur Lierre.

"Who was this *particulier*?" he said, worming himself in. "He looked like a stranger."

Rose by this time had every sense keenly alert, and succeeded in looking almost unconcerned.

"I think that it was one of the new gentlemen at the *École de Dressage*," she replied, as indifferently as possible.

"You think, eh?" Lierre echoed, sneeringly. "Well, I don't. I believe it was somebody vastly different. I was deliberating about that when you saw me at the door, and wondering where I had seen that chap before."

Rose made a movement with her shoulders indicative of utter ignorance, while her uncle, with his mouth half open, a little wreath of smoke from the cheap cigar he was smoking curling from the corner of it, stared suspiciously at her.

"Are you quite sure you don't know who it was?" he asked, ironically.

Rose replied almost immediately:

"Quite sure. He never was here before."

"Come here, Aline!" Lierre cried. "I think your daughter requires a little watching. I really believe she's receiving messages right under our noses. You'd better see to it."

Before the last words were well out of his mouth Madame Billot appeared, holding her dinner napkin in one hand and still chewing a mouthful of cake, her very fashion of entering truculent, as if her foot was in full readiness to kick anything or any person—especially her daughter—that might come in her way. She, too, had changed, and had lost much of her beauty and freshness;

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

her gestures were nervously restless, and she was evidently boiling over with chronic exasperation.

"What's that?" she cried. "Receiving messages—Rose?"

Rose again shrugged her shoulders and continued to busy herself with the flacons, powder-boxes, gayly decorated cakes of soap, and jars of sachet-powder piled almost breast-high on the top of the show-case behind which she stood. Her lower lip was pressed upward, forcing the upper one slightly out of place, in a sullen way which implied a singular force of resistance.

"Is what your uncle says true?" the mother threateningly demanded. "Answer me, or I'll get in there and box your ears!"

Rose moved along the curving counter and brusquely turned on and lit a brilliant gas "sun-burst" above her head, thus flooding the whole place with light and making it possible for the passers-by to discern everything that was going on within the shop.

"Uncle's lying as usual," she said, with a coarse intonation Lōic had never heard from her.

"Lying, is he!" Madame Billot almost shrieked, enraged beyond measure at seeing her threat rendered null and void by her daughter's clever manœuvre. "Well, that may be, seeing it's him, but, lying or no lying, I'm sick of having to watch you, and I'm going to take you on Sunday to your grandmother's beyond the marshes. There'll be no need for much watching there, and she's not the one to be hoodwinked by you, my girl, you can take my word for it!"

Rose's back was turned. She had begun to dust with a light feather *plumeau* the thick glass shelves rising, with their load of garishly labelled perfumery, tier upon tier to the dado of roughly painted ivy branches sur-

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

rounding the whole shop. At her mother's words a wave of crimson rose to her face and she but half suppressed a cry of pain.

"Oh, you don't like the idea? Perhaps it interferes with your plans," Monsieur Lierre called out, at random, quite ignorant of the accuracy of the shot.

"Hold your tongue, little man; leave her to me. I can manage her without your help," snarled the widow. "And you, Séraphine," she continued, turning furiously upon her second daughter, who had followed her in and was snickering tantalizingly and making a long nose at her sister, "let me see your heels. Your place is upstairs at your copy-books; go instantly!"

"Oh, pshaw! don't put on such airs," the lanky but extremely pretty fourteen-year-old girl said, contemptuously, but putting the whole width of the floor, nevertheless, between her mother and herself. "Go for Rose; she's used to it," and with a final grimace she scampered away, singing at the top of her lungs:

"Je voudrais que la Rose
Fut encore au Rosier,
Où que son ami Pierre
Fut encore à ses pieds!"

Madame Billot threw her napkin on the top of a pyramid of artistically scaffolded tooth and nail brushes with such violence that she brought them down with a loud clang upon the counter, and started in pursuit, one hand furiously uplifted, while Rose sank wearily upon a high, revolving stool, one of a stationary row that stood along the front of the show-case.

"Look here!" Monsieur Lierre said, leaning forward and bringing his fierce, sallow face within an inch of her own. "I'm up to your pretty game, my little pet!

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

You're trying, maybe, to give us the slip again, but *pas de ça Lisette!* To the marsh-lands you shall go, and if that don't answer—"

"What do you mean?" Rose asked, straightening herself on the narrow, slippery seat and looking fearfully at him.

"That I know yet of another prison for you, if that don't suffice," he replied, with a derisive little laugh—"a place where gay birds like you must needs roost alone!" He might have been speaking to a creature fallen into the lowest depths of the gutter, so intense was his contempt and ferocity.

Rose's eyes flashed dangerously, and her white teeth clinched for a moment over her lower lip.

"I won't go!" she cried, passionately.

The hair-dresser burst into a loud guffaw; the idea of Rose resisting him seemed infinitely diverting. "You'll have to do as you are told," he said, as soon as he could speak. "You are no longer *Madame le Marquise de la Main-Gauche*, but merely little Rose Billot, my much-dishonored niece, and I can force you to my will. *Voilà!* D' you think that I'm minded to have you discredit us all a second time with the Nobility and gentry here, and turn my shop into a howling wilderness? If your gambades had been of a nature to bring me new customers, I might have winked at them; but for you to decamp with the intimate friend of all the great houses here is a little too much for me to swallow. D' you want to beggar us? Nay, my sweet Rose, don't hang your head; you've got a kind uncle who'll put a spoke in your wheels, never fear."

Rose, staring hopelessly into the little villain's face, knew that she was utterly in his power—bound hand and foot. She could not resist either him or her mother, and,

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

least of all, could she prevent them from consigning her to the marsh-lands, where her hard-hearted, harsh-spoken grandmother—who abhorred her daughter-in-law and grandchildren alike—would make her life a hell. She realized that, now that their suspicions were once aroused, they would drag her relentlessly away, preventing her from being at the shop on the Monday appointed by Loïc; and at the thought she felt herself going stark, staring mad. The color which had been ebbing slowly from her face now burned there again brilliantly, her lips felt dry and shrivelled as if she had just passed through a sirocco, and her heart throbbed painfully—it seemed to be in her throat.

“Are you convinced?” went on Lierre, with the deliberate cruelty of a tyrant. “Do you see how neatly caught you are?”

His victim winced, and her pale eyes wavered, as if she were about to give way to panic and run straight out of that place of torment, she knew not whither.

“Our little town is getting too hot to be safe for you—the marshes will prove cooler—see!” Lierre was now bending over her like a man holding a whip over a cowering dog. “Besides,” he concluded, “there isn’t a *paroissien* under fifty years old at your granny’s farm—that’s reassuring, too, after a fashion, being given your inflammable nature!” and with a contemptuous nod the terrible Lierre pirouetted on his heel to go and resume his now ice-cold demi-tasse, calling out over his shoulder as he went: “Had it not been for fear of your cursed Marquis’s interference you’d long have been in a reformatory; but, after all, the marshes will be just as safe. Trust your loving granny for that.”

XIX

Wide-spread and stretching from the solid shore
Leagues to the low horizon, all the fens
Lay flat and shameless to the misty sun;
The thick air danced with heat, and unreal sounds,
Like curlew's cry or dreary insect's hum,
Held converse with the silence, that replied
With all the hopeless voices of the winds,
Susurrus of reeds, or billowing of the grass,
Bubbling of exhalations, or small life
That squeaked or splashed unseen; yea, of the clouds
Shadows alone seemed living things, and they
Darkened the scrofulous levels in their haste
To flee and pass beyond!

M. M.

As far as the eye could reach the unbroken levels were covered with low, rank growth, with here and there a scrubby willow—mile after mile without variety, without hope, and beneath it the stagnant waters of many marsh pools glittered sullenly. Here and there broad patches of tall reeds raised their dishevelled heads, the wicked green of their ribbon-like foliage—wholly undimmed by the slight frost which had occasionally come at night during the winter just past—only serving to heighten and intensify the melancholy effect of the great, gloomy expanse.

One's thoughts turned inevitably to the thousands of *Blues* that had been engulfed in these ghastly morasses during the Chouan wars, whose ghosts are believed by the peasantry to drift hopelessly forever in the night mist above the tufted grasses. Lives are constantly lost

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

there, and not even the sea—so the Vendéens say—shall give up at the last judgment dead so countless as the terrible bog.

It was a still, lifeless day; there was no sun, and the sky, of a uniform pearl gray, had that delicate, cottony appearance which in other climes would have presaged snow.

Walking one before the other, Madame Billot and Rose were cautiously proceeding upon a narrow track that alone offered a firm foothold and to deviate from which would be fatal, for on each side of it quaked lakes of semi-fluid mud, mottled over by broad flakes of mosslike vegetation bursting into unhealthy eruptions of glittering blisters prismatic as soap-bubbles.

As the two women advanced the path grew narrower, until it really became a difficult problem not to slip from it into the clucking sloughs licking at its base, and Rose, who was carrying a heavy valise, groaned and stopped for a moment to change it from one hand to the other.

"Yet another joy which I owe to you!" her mother angrily exclaimed, pausing, too, and glaring back at her daughter. "If at least we could have come yesterday, but in that storm it would not have been possible, and now your uncle is alone at the shop on a market-Monday. God knows what imbecilities he will manage to commit."

"Was it I who asked you to come?" Rose angrily protested, her eyes, disfigured by constant weeping, blazing in her white face. She was growing absolutely desperate, for it was now clearly impossible for her to escape, and she just then hated her mother with a ferocity bordering on madness.

"No, Mamzelle Chiffon," the widow replied, contemptu-

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

ously. "You certainly did not ask to come. In fact, I wouldn't be surprised to find that you had plotted something vastly different for to-day's entertainment."

"What do you mean?" the girl cried, gulping down a sob and letting the valise drop at her feet, where it lay almost half off the tiny track.

"Pick it up, you slut!" Madame Billot commanded, harshly. "I'll throw you in after it if you let it slip one inch farther!"

"Pick it up yourself!" Rose, now quite beside herself, shrieked back. "Why should I carry it all the way? You are stronger than I am, and I'm sick of being your servant!"

"You are, are you? Well, you won't be after this; you'll be your grandmother's, and she isn't going to spare you, for I'm going to tell her all about your disgraceful conduct, never fear. She's a bigoted woman, is *Grand-maman* Billot, and she'll make you suffer for your sins day and night."

"That's what we will see!" snarled the girl, defiantly. "I may have something to say about your own doings. Did she expect a mother like you to bring me up as a *Rosière*?"

"*Sacrée Carne!*" screamed the other, her face distorted with fury. "You—you deserve to be killed, that's what you deserve! Imputing your *débordements* to me! Wait till we come to a place where I can get at you—you'll lose nothing by the delay!"

They were standing within a few feet of each other at a spot where the width of the trail barely allowed one person to stand upon it. This was the very navel of the bog, a cuplike depression softly clucking and trembling in slimy, sticky greed. A sinister place, indeed, filled with the choking exhalations of decaying vegeta-

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

tion—a slow, relentless whirlpool, from the clutches of which it would be vain to try and extricate one's self if once it held its prey.

Aline Billot, clasping and unclasping yearning hands, would have given ten years of her life to be able to close them about the girl's throat. They were no longer mother and daughter, but two crazed rivals glaring savagely at each other, and who would stop at nothing, not even crime, in their exacerbated hatred.

"You'll not escape again!" Aline fairly yelled. "You'll never see your Marquis any more, even if he were not long since sick of you!"

"I'll escape you, and that at once!" Rose retorted, between closed teeth, and with a last flash of courage and despair she turned to run, but before she had taken two steps the widow, jumping over the valise, was upon her, and a miracle alone saved them from rolling together into the chuckling slough.

"We'll fall in!" Rose gurgled, putting out all her strength to disengage herself; but the elder woman's hands held her like tentacles, and the girl felt that it must now be a fight to the finish between them. With one supreme effort she freed her bursting throat and flung her mother from her, falling herself to her knees as Aline staggered over the edge of the track and fell with a thick splash into the gently rocking depths of the quagmire.

In a flash Rose was up again, and, not daring to look back, her ears filled with the ghastly cries for help behind her, she fled like the wind, straight before her, escaping a hundred deaths by mere instinct, and sobbing and shrieking wildly as she ran, like one utterly demented.

Faster and faster she ran, her feet hardly touching the ground, her breath coming in gasps, sweat pouring like rain from her face, stumbling, falling, dropping from

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

sheer exhaustion, only to stagger to her feet and dash on again, until at last she saw before her the gaunt telegraph-poles of the high-road looming above the thicket of bulrushes fringing the embankment, and realized that she must pause and set her disordered clothes to rights or else be stopped and questioned by the first person she chanced to meet.

With a violently beating heart and shaking from head to foot with terror and fatigue, she stopped on the edge of a pool of almost clear water that reflected like a mirror of bronze, and, bending over it, looked at herself. With a cry of dismay she recoiled, for the haunted creature which looked back at her from that glassy surface had nothing in common with the young girl who had passed there an hour before. The smooth complexion was now blotched and mottled with patches of white and bluish red, the forehead and cheeks were streaked with mud and sweat, and there was foam on the quivering lips. For a few seconds she stood there chattering and panting, her brain in a tumult; then, realizing dimly that she must not delay in effacing those telltale stigmas, with shaking fingers she adjusted her clothes, straightened her hat, smoothed her dishevelled hair, and finally, dipping her handkerchief in the slough-water, rubbed off the grime from her hands and face as quickly and as thoroughly as she could.

The sober, respectable, country highway dozed peacefully in the thin haze rising from the sea, with the lazy, good-natured platitude of French *chaussées*. No one was in sight; as far as she could gaze the broad, whitish ribbon was bare, and she set off at a brisk pace, forcing her quaking legs to steadiness and praying with all her might that her strength might endure until the end.

The end—what was that to be? She drearily decided

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

that if L^oic did not come she would kill herself—nothing but that could save her from the consequences of the horror she had just left behind her; and as she went she mumbled, half aloud, the outlines of the plans forming gradually in her aching head.

How she accomplished this return trip she never quite remembered; it remained with her afterwards as some fearful nightmare she dared not recall to mind, and during which she had groped about in a sort of paralyzing numbness, conscious of but one wish, one instinct, and that to reach the rendezvous, whatever the cost, whatever the pain. Strangely enough, the thought of her mother sinking gradually into the relentless, choking mud where she, her daughter, had thrust her did not trouble her just then; L^oic and the almost insurmountable difficulty of joining him in time alone was seared upon her dazed mind, excluding everything else; and when at last she reached La-Roche it was with an exclamation of delirious joy that she recognized from afar the familiar show-windows of her uncle's shop.

With a tension of all her nerves she steadied her pace, hurriedly glanced into a neighboring pastry-cook's mirror-like window to see if she now looked more human, and quickly, noiselessly, walked into the *parfumerie* with an apparent *sang-froid* which cost her the last remnants of her force of endurance. Her luck still held, however, for Monsieur Lierre was busy shaving a distinguished patron—whose throat, by-the-way, he came near to cutting in his astonishment—but whose presence prevented the immediate demand for explanations; and, save a "What, you, Rose?" uttered in a tone of profound stupefaction, Lierre suffered her to come up to the counter unhindered. As she bent her steps towards the brass-bound, winding staircase leading directly from the back

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

of the shop to the upper floor, however, he called out, "Where's your mother?" and, recognizing the necessity of an immediate reply, she managed to answer, in a voice almost steady:

"Stopped at the butcher's to get something for dinner."

"All right," was the curt rejoinder. "Don't go upstairs. Take off your hat here and wait till she comes."

There was nothing to do but to obey instantly, and with a heart beating to suffocation the girl snatched off her sadly bespattered toque, threw it beneath a counter, and slipped into her usual place, wondering dully whether she was too late, whether Lóic would keep his word and perchance arrive before the customer left, or whether she would, after all, have to face her uncle.

She was so tired that as soon as she sat down she felt her burning eyes close in almost irresistible torpor. Reaction was setting in, and she could hardly refrain from rolling to the floor. God! if only she could lie down for a few minutes, just long enough to relax her aching muscles. Stealthily she reached for a flacon of aromatic vinegar and dabbed her forehead with half its contents. Her ears were buzzing, every one of her nerves tingled separately, and a feeling of intolerable nausea made her clench her teeth and hold on with clammy hands to the edge of the show-case, which, fortunately, partially concealed her from view.

One by one she mechanically counted the minutes solemnly ticking from the flowered "grandfather clock" in the corner, while her hallucinated eyes showed her rows of old gentlemen being shaved and groomed instead of the solitary one over whom the heavily frowning Monsieur Lierre was bending. In a few moments he would have done, for already he was reaching out for the

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

powder-box—and then what? How could she explain her mother's non-appearance, her own return to this place from which she had been banished—no, no, she would not even try, but as soon as all hope of Lōic's arrival was past—and there was little left of it now, since it was already after three o'clock—she would rush out, run to the river, and drown herself. Perhaps Lōic had already come and gone, although this seemed scarcely possible, for then Monsieur Lierre would not have been able to jest feebly with his patron, and flourish towels and brushes in very nearly his customary bustling, obsequious manner.

Rose's hearing, rendered singularly acute by the agony she was enduring, was strained to catch the slightest outside noise, and she could have screamed with exasperation, when suddenly the shaven one began to laugh boisterously at some inane joke or other of her uncle's.

Some centuries ago—or was the stroke still resonant?—the clock had struck the half-hour, when she heard a noise which sent her heart hammering crazily once more against her ribs. She could not immediately localize or identify it, but in a flash its direction and nature came to her. A carriage—probably a four-in-hand—was approaching from the nearest street, and in a few seconds more she caught sight of it reflected in the mirror behind her. It was moving at a very rapid pace, and she could see that it was a mail-phaeton drawn by four magnificent bays and driven by Lōic de Kergōat, with his valet Robin beside him.

Slowly, cautiously, Rose glided—bent almost double—behind the protecting counter, reached the end of it unperceived, snatched the door open, and clanged it after her at the precise moment when the horses reached the

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

edge of the sidewalk, and with a crisp, crunching sound of dancing hoofs were stopped in a masterly fashion immediately opposite to her.

"Jump in!" L^oic commanded, and, dragged up by Robin, she found herself on the box-seat and the horses tearing down the length of the *Place* at a gallop before she fairly realized what had happened. As they turned into a side street she caught a glimpse of her uncle standing with uplifted arms, gesticulating violently on the threshold of the shop, and saw several pedestrians stop short to gaze open-mouthed upon the boldest elopement on record, then she fell fainting back against Robin.

The whole thing happened so quickly that the on-lookers could have believed that their imaginations had played them some trick had it not been for the sight of the half-demented Monsieur Lierre, his face purple, his lank hair on end, spluttering and cursing as he started in wild and vain pursuit of the vanishing phaeton—a sight which certainly testified to the reality of so unheard of an incident.

* * * * *

Above the great marsh flocks of water-fowl had gathered. Something disturbed their ordinary quietude, and a great flutter of wings broke the primæval silence of the broad reaches, where since the beginning of the world the vegetable kingdom had asserted its unquestioned sovereignty. From the dense thickets of reeds and ribbon-grasses, impenetrable to the foot of man, defying, in spite of their individual weakness, his prying hand, there rose the angry boom of bitterns, the screech of startled plovers, and the melancholy appeal of bright-plumaged ducks and soberly clad widgeons, while far up in the sky some inquisitive ravens streaked the dark

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

clouds with their sombre flight. The short day was drawing to an end; soon night would be creeping up to claim the bogland where her rule is more absolute than anywhere on the solid earth, for there it shows black, indeed, both above and beneath in the inextricable tangle. This particular gloaming seemed, somehow or other, singularly sinister and inhuman. Nevertheless, a human being was there—the cause of all this unrest and agitation of winged life—a man who was creeping step by step along one of the narrow tracks, and bringing to bear upon this task that sense of direction or trailing instinct with which gypsies and Indians are dowered.

It would appear that he was quite as much at home in the labyrinth of a Vendéen marsh as in the grassy paths of the orchard at Kergoat, for even in the early gathering twilight, intensified by banks of looming storm-clouds, he kept unerringly to the perilous little path, and had he not been burdened with the dead weight of an unconscious woman he would have made comparatively light work of the matter.

For a very long time he had been scrambling and stumbling along, obliged frequently to pause for breath—for Aline Billot was no light-weight—and he was beginning to be keenly conscious that did he fail to reach the Billot farm before night was upon him he risked being forced to remain in the marsh till daylight. It was getting cold, too, and all the while that darkness which he dreaded was stalking him with stealthy tread. Anathematizing these adverse circumstances and condemning bogs to summary judgment, Malghorn bent all his energies to reach the little farm. He knew that he had only to follow the wandering track; but would he be able to do this if he could no longer distinguish it from the sombre greenery which concealed a horrible death on both sides

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

of it? Meanwhile, his lips parted breathlessly and his muscles cracked under the burden in his arms. Was the woman still alive? She did not give any sign of consciousness, and not even the faintest tremor moved her limply pendent limbs or caused her slime-caked clothes and dismally matted, drooping hair to stir ever so slightly.

At last Malghorn came to a wider space made by the intrusion of a curious *coulée* of solid land into the bed of the bog, and with a grunt of relief lowered his burden to the ground.

"Dead or alive," he muttered, "this is not quite the bit of evidence Maître Rivier expected me to get!" He wiped his dripping brow on his coat-sleeve, and calmly resumed his monologue: "I wonder"—casting speculative eyes upon the prostrate form at his feet—"if the game was worth the candle, and whether I'll get anything more pleasing out of it all than a foundered back and a ruined suit of clothes?" Then addressing himself directly to the senseless woman, he continued: "It was touch-and-go for you, *la p'tite Mère*. Suppose I hadn't been sent to spy around your blessed mother-in-law's farm this morning, you'd have had your bellyful of mud by now—perhaps you're dead as it is; but, in any case, you owe me a fine candle! Or suppose you hadn't been able to grab hold of the corner of that valise!" And judging with reason that it behooved him to hurry, now that his strained muscles felt a little rested, he stooped down, and, taking the inert weight beneath the shoulders, lifted it bodily from the puddle of mud and ooze in which he had carelessly laid it, and resumed his painful way towards the *Ferme des Marais*.

CHAPTER XX

You may overthrow a Virtue, may eradicate a Vice,
But if they form alliance and combine,
Know then that hostile Fortune has against you thrown the dice,
Oh, recognize at once the fatal sign!
For the Good excuses t'other, and they guarantee each other,
And the False becomes supporter of the True,
And to tear their roots asunder you may strive until the thunder
Of the Judgment Day shall make the world anew. M. M.

"— — — — you alone can now interfere, and perhaps make that unfortunate boy understand that he is sacrificing his whole life and all his chances of happiness! Tell him that a Marquis de Kergôat has no right to fling away honor, fortune, and the esteem of his Peers for the sake of a wretched girl picked up in the gutter, or even for that of a bastard—bastards are deplorably out of date, my poor Gäidik, we are no longer living in the days of Froissart!—besides, this one is of the wrong sex! Lóic can provide as handsomely as he pleases for both the mother and the child, but he must leave them; this *collage* cannot be endured! You are my only hope, and since your uncle René and I are assuming the responsibility of bringing you back from so very far away, we trust that you will leave no stone unturned to put an end to this terrible situation. Your mother must be mad! For years she prepared her son's ruin, and now she is doing, wittingly or unwittingly—I don't know which—all she can to precipitate the end. *C'est à se casser la tête contre les murs!* Read this interminable letter carefully and act accordingly, my dear child.

"Ever your loving aunt, ELIZABETH."

THE reader was seated in a train rushing at full speed over the last miles of the Dover-London line. It was a summer evening, but wreaths of dun-hued fog were, nevertheless, creeping in through the open windows

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

from the amazing tangle of streets and houses constituting Europe's largest metropolis, and casting an additional gloom upon Gäidik, who, with a quick, impatient gesture, folded the oft-read document once more and slipped it into a side-pocket. She had not changed much, had Gäidik; hers was still the same slight, girlish form, her calm gray eyes still sparkled with that iron pride of all high-caste Bretons who, bearing names almost dangerously historic, have been brought up to carry their heads above the petty strifes and disgusting struggles of modern times. There was an air of extreme determination about her whole small person, and between her eyebrows a fine line denoting the deep concentration of her thoughts. For a moment she gazed unseeingly at the ugly thoroughfares and the dingy tenements, then slowly and with the careful attention which she accorded to all she did, she drew her long suède gloves over the dazzle of emeralds and diamonds upon her fingers, smoothed the last wrinkle around her slender wrists, and then sat quietly inhaling the fragrance of a large bouquet of violets which had lain in her lap, while the train lumbered heavily on, to be blocked at Cannon Street, and there stand stock-still, wrapped about by the dismal, smoke-grimed atmosphere, until at last the line cleared, the great locomotive clanked on and screeched itself nerve-wrackingly into the terminus.

Silently the brother and sister greeted each other, both marvelling, during that first moment, that there should be so little change in their respective faces, upon which was just then an identical look of exceptional force of endurance strained to the uttermost.

There were unshed tears in Gäidik's eyes, and perhaps Løic also did not feel quite sure of himself, for he turned his head away as, pressing her arm closely within his own,

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

he hurried her away under his footman's umbrella—for it had begun to drizzle—towards his waiting brougham, where a huge bouquet of pearl-hued orchids gleamed upon the seat in a welcome of ghostly whiteness, beneath the mist-smear'd electric lights.

As soon as they were in the carriage, however, he drew the glass up with an impatient gesture and threw his arms passionately about his sister; but still neither spoke, and it was only when they had reached the great hotel facing the Park, and the privacy of the suite ordered by telegraph for her, that he at last broke a silence almost oppressive in its duration and import.

"You have come," he said, slowly, "on a hopeless errand, my poor little girl. I hate to tell you such a thing at the outset, but your letter left me no doubt as to what you wish to accomplish, and it is best that I should be quite frank with you, is it not?"

Gäidik was silent for a moment, then, looking steadily at him, asked, quietly:

"Have I then lost all my influence over you, Lõic?"

"Don't pretend to ignore your powers," he replied, beginning to pace up and down. "You are, on the contrary, the only being in the world who has any influence at all; but circumstances are vastly different from what you believe them to be."

"Possibly," she said, gently; "and whatever these circumstances may be, I am here to hear your reasons for causing me so much pain, Lõic."

He winced, for this was just what he had dreaded; he was about to cut to the heart this little sister whom he adored, and whom he had not seen for so long.

"Since that is so," he said, vainly attempting to speak as calmly as she did, "I ask you before we go any further to hear patiently what I have to tell you. Oh, it will

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

not take long," he continued, with inexpressible bitterness. "In an hour or so I can easily show you what a hash I have made of it all!"

"Don't speak like that!" Gäidik exclaimed. "Do you think it is agreeable for me to hurt you like this immediately on arriving?"

"I know! I know!" Lõic answered, sorrowfully. "It is a bad business for us both; but please, please, Gäidik, listen indulgently to what I have to say, for I want you to know my motives for doing what I have done, and we must face the ordeal as best we can." And without giving himself time to lose courage, he at once began the recital of all that had befallen him since his return from the United States, doing so frankly, simply, and without a single reticence.

Gäidik heard in absolute silence. She did not once interrupt him, nor did she comment upon what he was saying, but he several times saw her lips quiver and her eyes fill with instantly repressed tears.

"That is all?" she asked, when he at last paused. "You are sure that you forget nothing?"

"That is all," said Lõic, "and I have forgotten nothing."

She rose, came close to him, and, laying both hands on his shoulders, said, with a pitiful effort to control the trembling of her lips:

"What I want to know is what you and I have ever done to deserve all we are both going through. Why couldn't we have been left together to live our lives side by side? None of this should have ever happened; but everybody seems to have conspired to separate us by plots and lies and to wreck not only one but two lives." Her voice broke and she pressed her face against his breast, fighting hard for composure, while he, afraid to speak

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

lest he should lose all self-control, held her tightly in his arms. For a few seconds they remained thus, and then Gäidik raised her white face, and, looking deep into his eyes, said, pleadingly:

"It is not yet too late, Lõic. Think how young we both are! There are many, many years still before us! Are we to spend them apart always? Is it you now who are deliberately going to build up an impassable barrier between us, and that for the sake of a woman whom you do not love, for whom you have already sacrificed so much, and who is in no wise worthy of you?"

"And what about the child?"

The words fell like lead upon Gäidik's heart. She drew away, and with hands clinched together so violently that her rings actually cut into her flesh, moved a few paces from him.

"Don't make it too hard for me, Gäidik!" Lõic exclaimed, imploringly. "Surely you do not want me to abandon that poor, helpless little thing?"

"No!" Gäidik replied, resolutely; "give her to me! I swear to you that I shall bring her up as if she were my own, and that she will never know what it is to be motherless. Surely you must see that it is her best chance! Do not say no, my darling, my darling! We have always been all in all to each other. Listen to me now! Don't ruin your whole life! Can't you understand that I'm in the right, that you have carried your chivalrous behavior towards this woman already too far?"

"And you!" he cried, desperately. "Can't you see that it is impossible for me to do what you ask?"

"Why?" she demanded, bending once more towards him, tense and quivering from head to foot. "Why?"

"Because she, Rose, will not consent to give up her child, and has the whip-hand of me there; because I am

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

caught, trapped, by my very love and tenderness for this baby that she knows I will not leave behind."

Gaidik looked at him in infinite distress. "Oh!" she said, bitterly. "So that's her little game, is it? That's how she hopes to finally force you to marry her! And it is perchance reserved for me to see you, Lóic de Kergoat, the brother I am so proud of, take to wife this—" She stopped, afraid of giving full rein to her rising anger, and in a tone which cut him like a knife, she continued: "Do you realize that this would be the first mésalliance in our family during fourteen hundred years? I will no longer speak of myself, since that seems without avail, but of your own responsibilities towards your people, past and present. That may serve better! Do you really mean to bring disgrace and dishonor upon all of us? Even a marriage would repair nothing! At best it could only take place out of France, and be but a doleful farce—a thing to be ashamed of for ever and ever—since you will never obtain Mamma's indispensable consent."

"You forget," he said, gravely, "that there is very much to be ashamed of on both sides!"

"How!" she cried, instantly aglow with indignation. "You have something to be ashamed of with regard to this girl? You who have behaved with such idiotic unselfishness, who have accepted for her sake a situation which is adequate to avenging all the crimes of the Borgias! Ah, leave me alone, you seem to have lost all power of judgment! I know you, Lóic, you have persisted in this folly chiefly to fight your mother's machinations; had it not been for her, or had I been there, you would never have begun it in the first place! It will be my eternal regret that I was not there! But now the time has come to act sensibly at last!"

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

"Don't talk to me of my mother!" he interrupted, with a violence in which she recognized the sting of a home-thrust. "The way she has acted through all the abominable persecutions she directed against Rose made it impossible for me not to stand by her. Why, had I not carried her off by main force from La-Roche, and then from France, Madame de Kergoat would have, thanks to her powerful influences, lodged her in St. Lazare, and my little girl would have been born in a den of fallen women, thieves, and assassins."

Gäidik stamped her little foot. "But all this is now past!" she in turn interrupted. "There is no longer any question of St. Lazare. You can provide for the girl and buy off the baby. Are you sure you are not still ready to sacrifice us, both yourself and me, to the satisfaction of beating your mother to the end?" She paused, sorry to have been betrayed into saying that, for, after all, this was their first hour together after a long, weary separation, and she could not bear to see the look in his eyes. With a swift repentance she slipped to her knees before him where he sat, as once many years before in her tower-room at Kergoat, and, nestling close to him, said, penitently: "Forgive me, my own Frérot. Don't let us talk any more about this, for the present, if possible. We must not spoil this first evening utterly. To-morrow, when we have thought it over more, it will be time enough. Just now we are both overwrought and do not see clearly."

A light of relief crossed Lōic's face. He kissed her tenderly, and, smoothing back the "honeylocks" he loved so well, murmured:

"Oh, I'm only too anxious to shelve this miserable question—at least for the present; I only wish I could do so once and for all, for I cannot endure the thought of opposing you, my own Gäid—my dearest of all—"

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

There was a long silence.

Their nerves were so fearfully jangled that it took all their will-power to cast off the burden of the situation, even temporarily; but they succeeded during the next few hours in conjuring up, after a fashion, the never-to-be-forgotten days of their childhood, that already seemed so long ago, and nothing save an occasional indefinable tension in Lóic's attitude or a strained note in Gáidik's voice really recalled to them the grim shadow that waited outside the door. This one evening was in spite of it all an oasis of delight to both, and when they parted her eyes sought his with a misty gaze that made him wince, and he felt her hands clinging to his with a desperate grip, as if she dreaded this would be the last of their old times together, and she would never have him for herself again.

As soon as he had gone an intense grief descended upon the poor girl and swept her away in its feverish mill-race of dreads and anxieties. Knowing her brother as well as she did, she felt a sickening sense of failure, although the decisive discussion had been postponed until the next day. She faithfully observed her promise to go to bed immediately, but only found a vocal darkness and unprofitable tossings, and when at length a weary slumber came, it was even more bitter than her waking thoughts. Again and again she started from tormented dreams. Now it would be her Frérot's marble-white face floating amid inky waves, with closed eyes and the blue, pinched look of death about the lips and nostrils, that tore her almost with a shriek from her pillows; now it was his mangled and bleeding body that was dragged into her presence by a woman whose face she vainly tried to see. Again and again she sat up in bed, her heart hammering like mad, her cheeks covered with

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

tears, and finally, as the first streaks of the mid-summer dawn began to show in faint tints of primrose above the trees of Hyde Park, she rose, and, without summoning her maid, bathed and dressed.

No longer could she endure the indecision, the misery, the gnawing apprehension; she must see Lōic, and that at once. The thought of ever putting herself into open and rancorous antagonism to him was one which she could not endure, and yet an inward suggestion, often repressed, told her that she was pleading a hopeless cause. Nevertheless, the matter could not hang in the balance any longer; one way or the other it must be clinched without further delay.

Lōic had appointed to meet her at her apartments at noon, but she ordered the carriage to drive immediately to Richmond, in which vicinity he had installed himself with Rose and the baby. As she paced up and down, waiting, her burden of misery was suddenly increased by another heavy thought, which had already grinned at her from behind his chair at dinner the night before. She had noticed that he, formerly the most abstemious of men, who, save for a few boyish frolics, had never taken a glass of wine beyond a very moderate allowance, and, in spite of his Western experiences, scarcely ever touched spirits, had drunk far more deeply than she had ever seen him. The de Kergōats were famed for the steadiness of their heads, and Lōic, their worthy descendant, had not—as the phrase goes—“turned a hair,” but still, now that she came to think of it, the quantity he had taken was disquieting, whether one looked upon it as a matter of regular habit or merely as a bracer taken on occasion.

At that thought Gaidik, the self-controlled and calm, fell into a bottomless gulf of despair. Was his association

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

with that woman going to make him turn to such a means of consolation and comfort? What was to be done? How should she act in order to extricate him from all this net-work of dangers? Her reasonable mind no longer made itself heard, and amplifying her former forebodings she conjured up the most fearful pictures of his future, shuddering at each new creature of her imagination, until their very extravagance brought a reaction.

"This comes from having had a bad night and no breakfast!" she muttered, wrathfully. Surely she had been temporarily mad to think even for an instant that her Lóic, her own plucky Frérot, could ever fall so low as that! How shamefully she had insulted him in letting her thoughts dwell on such impossibilities, and, thoroughly disgusted with herself, she hastened to her carriage and drove away.

It was glorious weather, and even London, the fog-centre of Europe, for once allowed nature to have her own sweet way. As the inconceivable meanness of the city streets fell behind the swiftly trotting horses, Gáidik felt herself gradually revive. Perhaps, after all, matters were not so desperate. In a very little while she would see Lóic, and what might not all her arts of persuasion, backed by a great love, accomplish? As for the extreme unconventionality of her going to hunt him up at this, his more than unofficial home, such a trifle did not weigh with her just then more than a feather.

The place where Lóic had pitched his temporary tent lay well away from the coach-road, some miles from any railway station, and nestled cosily on the flank of a gorse and heather covered hill—which reminded Gáidik deliciously of Brittany—crowned by a pine forest. The house itself was an old manorial dwelling, a graceful succession of rose-garlanded gables built of white-faced red

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

brick beautifully toned by age, and surrounded by broad terraces overlooking a blossoming park.

From the lodge-gates the ground rose rapidly across sweeping lawns dotted with clumps of rhododendrons, and as Gäidik was swiftly driven along she caught sight of a much beribboned nurse wearing the gorgeous costume of a Bourguignonne *Nounou*, walking with stately dignity beneath the trees and bearing in her arms her lace-swathed nursling. This made her heart bound in her breast—Lôic's first-born—poor, little, innocent baby, the chief cause of all her distress and of his! She bit her lips and resolutely turned her eyes away, bringing them to bear upon a footman who, at the approach of the carriage, was hurrying down the terrace steps to meet it. There was profound astonishment in this personage's eyes, in spite of his well-trained rigidity of mien; evidently visitors of her type were not habitual here, and it was with profound deference that he expressed his regrets at his master's absence. Indeed, his Lordship had been gone since yesterday at noon, and had left no word as to the hour of his return. Gäidik felt for a second the whole force of the adage about hope deferred, but suddenly had another thought. After a moment's hesitation: "Then is her—her—Ladyship at home?" "*Her Ladyship*"—the words forced themselves with extraordinary difficulty from the *Grand Dame's* lips, but the die was now cast; she would see this thorny Rose who had torn so many lives, and as in response to the evidently amazed assent of the powdered-headed official she alighted and followed him into a thickly carpeted hall, she murmured under her breath, "*Allah! c' était écrit!*"

Two more footmen rushed to the assistance of their colleague, in order to usher her with proper ceremony into the drawing-room, where she calmly awaited Mlle.

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

Rose Billot! The apartment was spacious and luxuriously furnished, but Gãidik noticed there a certain *je ne sais quoi*, which displeased her. To begin with, there were no flowers either in the deep embrasures nor on any one of the tables and consoles; a gaudy bonbon-box lay upon the floor surrounded by a shower of multi-colored *fondants*; the cushions of the sofa were disarranged; on the chairs and lounges were scattered magazines, books, and other trifles which certainly had no business there; and one of the handsome lace window-curtains was looped back in the middle with a common hair-pin! At this last damning *pièce de conviction*, Gãidik's shoulders went up with a little shrug of pity, and turning away she almost fell over an open guitar-case wherein two little white kittens were struggling for the possession of a chop-bone.

"Careless servants," she commented; "pompous but—decidedly careless, which is strange in England, where servants are generally good. But those can't be blamed, after all," she concluded, with that little smile of well-bred cynicism which is the despair and envy of the parvenu. And then she added, softly, in a vastly different tone, a "Poor Lôic!" which brought tears to her eyes.

One always sees with delight a skilled swordsman take up the foil, and had there been an observer hidden behind that hair-pin-looped curtain he would have keenly enjoyed the sight of Gãidik, as hearing a sudden rustle of silk against the closed door, she mechanically squared her shoulders and faced round, looking straight in front of her with that perfect self-possession which is in-bred, not acquired. Presently, after what seemed an unnecessarily long interval, the door opened slowly, hesitatingly, and Gãidik became vaguely conscious of a desire to smile,

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

for there entered a girl dressed in the latest fashion; no furbished-up gown from the hands of a provincial dress-maker, or ready-made frock purchased at a more or less expensive shop, but a unique creation from some great *couturier*, a sumptuous azure satin affair which might have been worn by a Queen for a Royal five-o'clock tea; and the practised flash of Gaidik's experienced eyes saw that it had been hastily donned to dazzle her, and was carelessly buttoned over a crushed and crumpled night-rail! The brown hair surmounting the insignificant face was more than allowably tousled and was garnished with a delicious little morning-cap of lace and pale-blue gauze, which had seen already too much service not to be shamed by the unworn brilliancy of that turquoise-hued tea-gown. The observer behind the curtain would have laughed out loud if death itself were to be the penalty of his indiscretion, so ludicrous was the contrast between this intempestive finery and the extraordinary chic and fitness of Gaidik's plain, biscuit-colored batiste, graceful hat wreathed with pale lime-blossoms, long, tan suède gloves, and little brown shoes peeping forth from the delicate *frou-frous* of a Valenciennes petticoat.

There is nothing so disquieting as the unknown motive, which disquietude may be pardoned in Rose as she advanced towards her unexpected visitor. She saw at a glance—so great was their likeness—that this must be Lóic's sister, and yet her presence there was so stupefying that she was unable to bring herself to believe it possible.

This doubt was easily read by Gaidik, and in a perfectly natural tone she said, courteously:

"I must introduce myself. I am Monsieur de Kergoat's sister."

Rose winced. "Monsieur de Kergoat!" Why did she

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

not say "Lôic"? But she tried to conceal her embarrassment, and, indicating a chair, asked rather too off-handedly:

"Won't you sit down?"

That Gäidik hesitated only for the fraction of a second before accepting the proffered seat must be placed to her credit. As she did so, a strong whiff of the scent Rose used reached her nostrils; and she gulped; it was musk, that *parfum par excellence du trottoir*, and her feeling of dislike for the girl grew into instant repugnance!

"I am here this morning—rather too early, I fear—to see my brother; but hearing that he was absent, I thought it best to ask you to receive me," she said, gently, nevertheless, and without a trace of hauteur or coldness. Rose was nervously twirling the long ribbons of her magnificent sash, and the very softness of the tone made her feel uneasy, for reasons of her own. Lôic also had the secret of it, and it always seemed to open unbridgeable gulfs between them when he used it.

"It is very kind of you to have come," she said, awkwardly. "Would you like to see Baby?"

This was a facer. Gäidik read the girl too well to imagine for an instant that this acceptance of her presence as though she had come to pay a polite visit was purposely put forward; that would have been far too clever a move for such as she. No, it was certainly sheer, cowlike stupidity, but it staggered the woman of the world none the less for a fleeting instant.

"Pardon me," she said, extinguishing from her voice all the apparent good-will of her *première-manière*, "I have asked to see you simply in order to tell you a few things which it is necessary for you to know."

"Oh," Rose said, sullenly, "I can guess what it's about! You'd like to separate me from Lôic!"

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

"I would scarcely have put it so bluntly," Gäidik replied, perfectly unruffled, "but since you take it that way, I am entirely ready to state that this is exactly why I have come to London from half across the world."

"I thought so," Rose sneered, with an attempt at impertinence which even in her own eyes was completely foiled by the other's imperturbable calm.

"Pray let us leave acrimony out of this discussion. I have no ill-feelings towards you personally; I know all you have gone through, and am sorry for you; but still this does not alter the fact that you are hopelessly ruining my brother's life."

"I don't see why you say that!" Rose exclaimed. "He is not the first great gentleman to have a liaison."

"Certainly not!" Gäidik acquiesced. "But this particular case is different, for if my brother persists in living with you it means his breaking forever with his family, his friends, his entire *milieu*. It also means his condemning himself to absolute isolation, and his risking to be saddled with a *Conseil Judiciaire*, which will deprive him for many years of the control of the greater part of his money. Do you follow me?"

Rose, sitting bolt upright, was staring incredulously at her visitor. This was a woman whose words commanded respect. Had she, Rose, then been lulling herself into false security? She could scarcely treat such a warning with contempt. Her pink-and-white complexion slowly turned gray, yet she strove to hold her ground, and although her voice shook a little, she said, with assumed confidence:

"It will never come to that! His mother wouldn't dare!"

"Yet that is precisely what she is now trying to do as a last means to her end; indeed, had it not been for our

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

aunt de Briëlle and the Comte de Kergoat, the thing would in all probability have been already accomplished."

Gäidik spoke without the least passion or emphasis; she was merely stating facts which could speak for themselves with a terrible significance. Rose fidgeted uneasily in her chair, stole a side-long glance at her adversary, and suddenly her pale eyes flaming with malice, she said, brutally:

"I am not holding Lõic by force. If he is willing to leave me and to give up his child, of course we must go."

Gäidik looked curiously at her. She felt the thrust, but her voice was cruelly indifferent as she replied:

"Precisely! I quite understand that your child is your sharpest weapon. However—" She did not finish the sentence, for unfortunately the door was pushed open and the imposing *Nounou*, carrying her nursling, strode unceremoniously in. With an exclamation of relief Rose, conscious of her opportunity, ran towards her, snatched the baby from her arms, and, dismissing her with a curt word, rushed back to Gäidik, saying, triumphantly:

"Do you think he will give that up easily?"

She had pushed aside the long lace veils, and, holding the white chrysalis towards Gäidik, she continued: "He is so proud of her, and he always says that she is the image of you! I can see now that it is true!"

Mechanically, Gäidik took the soft, warm bundle and gazed with a strange blending of delight and pain at the loveliest baby-girl she had ever seen. Yes, it looked ridiculously like her, and like Lõic, too; there was absolutely nothing "Billottesque" in those extraordinarily and prematurely formed features. The large, gray eyes, cherubically thoughtful and grave; the delicately aquiline nose—an unheard of thing in the generality of babies;

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

the firmly arched lips—nay, even the fine little curling tendrils of silky, copper-hued hair peeping forth beneath the lace hood—were purely Kergöat, and Kergöat at its best!

Gäidik gazed and gazed at the small face as if both Lõic's fate and her own were written there, and Rose, who watched her with catlike attention, guessed the meaning of the suspicious moisture gathering in the eyes so much like her Baby's, but scarcely the iron self-control which prevented that moisture from becoming tears.

"We have called her after you," she said, coaxingly, "although as yet we say *Kikette*—that's more baby-like"; and bending close over the little one, she snapped her unpleasantly square-tipped white fingers, crooning in the nasal tones which some women deem it necessary to adopt when speaking to infants:

"Allons Kikette faites risette à Tantante!"

Gäidik in her amazement nearly dropped her light burden; and yet, yes, this was really her niece—her own flesh and blood; there could be no doubt about that! Indeed, so great was the spell of that baby-beauty, so enthralling the throng of memories, of yearning emotions that looked up at her out of those solemn baby eyes, that she almost forgot the incongruity of the thing and hardly heard Rose chattering tirelessly on.

"Isn't she lovely? I'm sure, if her grandmother once saw her, she'd forgive Lõic at once," that silly young woman at last concluded.

This roused Gäidik. She looked keenly at the girl, again wondering whether this was clever insolence; but no, the wheedling voice was corroborated by the nervous attitude and the embarrassed eyes that fell before her own. It was only another shift of an ignorant, over-

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

awed woman, uncertain of her ground, and vacillating between propitiation and defiance.

"Ah, you want my brother to marry you!" she said, coldly, drawing back a step. Her heart was like lead, for the sight of that adorable baby made it clear to her how fast L^oic was held, and marriage, alas! seemed no longer such an utter impossibility.

Rose flushed crimson. "No!" she said, angrily. "No! No! That, never!"

"Oh-h-h!" murmured G^aidik, and that was all.

The silence that followed was as tense as if something in the atmosphere was about to snap. It lasted only a moment, but long enough for G^aidik to see as by the sudden flash of a search-light, or as if a heavy veil had suddenly become transparent, leaving the girl's motives bare, and Rose felt that it was so!

"You fancy that you hold him more securely as things are, thanks to that poor, little, dishonored child?" G^aidik asked at last. For the first time there was something in the low, level tones that cut like the lash of a whip.

Rose did not answer; she was looking attentively at the carpet and seemed to be counting the flowers woven into its rich texture.

"You think that you hold him more securely thus?" repeated G^aidik.

"No! No!" Rose muttered, feebly; she was paralyzed by a feeling that was quite new to her—the horrid sensation that something had gone from her, her power to hoodwink, to misrepresent, to resort to subterfuge. Her strongest, indeed, her only shield had fallen before G^aidik's penetrating eyes, and, thoroughly disarmed, she instinctively made a little, appealing gesture towards her adversary that, however much it might have influenced

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

Lôic, was quite thrown away upon his sister. Then, suddenly recollecting herself:

"It's—it's—not true!" she cried, breathlessly, fright and anger making her voice shake. "Besides, you have no business to—to—try and turn me inside out like that. You have no right—you are cruel and unjust. I don't even know what you mean with all those *finasseries!*"

"Oh yes, you do," said Gäidik, inexorably; "you are a very shrewd young woman in your little way! You have found out that once married he would wield absolute power over you and your child, and in the paltriness of your soul, in the smallness of your trust in him, you imagine that he would then discard you and keep his little daughter. I do not compliment you on your point of view."

Rose was now gasping like a swimmer in stormy waters. She had not even the presence of mind to resume her seat, but remained awkwardly standing before her accuser. "It's not true!" she cried again, defiantly.

"Why, you have already admitted it," was the cold reply. "You will neither marry him nor relinquish him. Do you expect me under such circumstances to refrain from throwing my weight into the balance against you?"

"I don't care!" Rose exclaimed again, suddenly relapsing into the manners of the home circle at the *Parfumerie Lierre*. "If you do, you'll lose what's left to you of Lôic. Had he loved you really, d'you think he would have run off with me? But you were thousands of miles away attending to your own affairs. What do you come now and try to interfere for? It's too late; he is mine. I love him, and I'll keep him!"

Gäidik was smiling, but there was something in that frosty little smile that made Rose pause.

"So that is what you call love?" Gäidik said, mechani-

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

cally tightening her hold upon the baby, now crowing happily against her shoulder. "You know that you are dooming both your child and your child's father to absolute misery, and yet you can talk of love!" She rose from her chair, kissed Kikette's soft little face tenderly before handing her back to her mother, and continued: "If you loved him you would set him free and let me bring up this little one. It seems much to ask, perhaps, and before seeing you I might have hesitated to demand such a sacrifice, but now I read you too well to think that it is your heart that is concerned in all this. You would not cling very long to my brother if he were penniless, and if, embittered by the consequences of his folly, he no longer treated you with that chivalrousness which is so new to you. Remember that we are ready to give you a fortune if you will do as I say, a fortune which will enable you to lead a free and happy life wherever you wish. It would be better for you, after all, to do this than to drag him down to ruin, for what will you have then?"

"I don't believe a word you say. You're only trying to frighten me!" Rose muttered, sullenly.

"I am not. I am offering you your only chance under the circumstances. A demand for marriage I could have understood, but your cold-blooded calculations are beyond me. You know that your only hold upon my brother is through this child, and you think by such means to play fast for him and loose for yourself. Believe me, you will earn your own punishment," and with a slight inclination of the head she turned towards the door.

"Don't go like that!" the terrified Rose cried, trying to bar the way. She would have given much to know what this cold-faced, impassive woman was about to do.

"Why not?" Gäidik asked, pausing for a second.

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

"We have, I think, nothing further to tell each other. If you change your mind, pray remember that our offer stands good, and that, personally speaking, no sacrifice will be too great for me to make for my brother's sake."

Then, without another word, she passed out of the room to her waiting carriage. It was characteristic of her that, although she walked slowly, she never turned her head.

Book 10
The Trident

CHAPTER XXI

O thou Hesperia, latest sprung of all
The sea-born sirens, richly dowered heir
Of gracious legend—far Homeric isles
Avalon and Atlantis—ah, too oft
Nearer approachment doth reveal in thee
All the stern lineaments of thy rugged sire,
The swart sky-bearer of the Afric shore,
Whom the swift hero with the Gorgon's head,
Turned to ridg'd granite overgrown with pines!
Henceforth should they who would adventure them
To win thy golden apples, think upon
Thy guardian dragon, and their limbs endue
With mightiest mail and strength of Heracles.

M. M.

THE pretty, sunlit rooms looked upon one of the most pleasant views in New York. From the parlor windows one could see the silver-gray waters of the Harlem River winding slowly and silently down towards the huge city, between its abrupt green banks spanned by the towering white piers of the Aqueduct and the bold, steel arch of Washington Bridge—banks just then tufted with soft-foliaged trees and bathed in the warm, mellow glow of spring.

The flat on the upper floor of a handsome new house, built entirely of gleaming white stone, was comfortably, even elegantly, furnished, and in the dainty hues of the curtains and carpets, the chaste shapes of the tables, chairs, and lounges, one could easily trace the taste of a well-trained and well-bred purchaser. There were but

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

few pictures on the cartridge-papered walls, but these pictures were all good—a few proof-engravings, two or three masterly water-colors, a marine scene in sepia, on each side of the chimney-piece a couple of exquisite miniatures of the eighteenth century, and between two windows the magnificent pastel portrait of a woman in Court dress, surmounted by a Ducal Crown.

This for the parlor. The dining-room was finished in light oak, and on the carven sideboard and narrow side-tables were some pieces of massive antique silverware, and a few choice bits of almost transparent porcelain and gorgeous *Faienza*, which had certainly not first seen daylight either on those shores or during our era. The two bedrooms, too, had an aspect entirely uncommon to New York flats, the toilet-set basking on the bureau of that occupied by the master of this small but surprisingly dainty establishment was of ebony, with heavy gold monograms and Marquis's coronets; and was further characterized by a wealth of ivory boot-jacks, expensive boot-trees, teak-wood whip-stands, a couple of tiger-skins, against which were fastened trophies of costly arms, and a bewildering confusion of box-spurs, hunting-stirrups, curb-chains, silver and gold mounted flasks, riding-sticks of astonishing variety, and an array of tall boots, denoting better than any words could do the favorite occupation of their owner.

The apartment, in fact, was as odd as it was picturesque—a high degree of merit in our levelling and vulgar age; and to live in it would scarcely have been a penance to any one—even a person accustomed to much grander dwellings—had it not been for many things that will hereafter be explained.

Trotting back and forth from one room to another, on tiny, slipped feet, or teasing the big hound that lay in

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

statuesque repose upon the hearth-rug, a lovely baby girl, with great, gray eyes and a halo of ruddy silken curls, was pouring out a rapid series of prettily lisped questions in French to her mother, who, leaning against one of the parlor windows, was lazily watching, between dismally prolonged yawns, the glory of the setting sun illuminating with all the fires of a general conflagration the million windows of Harlem, New York, and even, like tiny points of flame, the distant factories of Long Island City.

She turned as a woolly head and a print-enwrapped pair of shoulders were thrust through the half-open door leading into the passage, and a "black but comely" servant-girl inquired, in accents worthy of Brer Remus himself, whether "de Boss wus gahn to be home foh dinnah."

"You meen my 'usband?" quoth the lady, languidly, moving towards her.

"Yes'm, I s'pose so!"

"I doo not know ven 'e come," again drawled Madame, in the most uncertain of Franco-Saxon; and, as with a scream of delight her little daughter rushed away in the wake of Dinah's flying pink skirts and white apron, she resumed her all-absorbing occupation of yawns and gazings until the gold and rose slowly died out of land and sky and twilight shed its gray ashes upon the world. Then she woke with a start from the dull reverie which had kept her so long at the window, and, scratching a match, taken from a delicious little burnished-silver stand, against the side of a highly polished and engagingly new bookcase, turned on the gas of the chandelier and flooded the place with brilliance.

"Kikette! Kikette!" she called, and, receiving no answer, she dragged herself to the kitchen, where, seated on a low chair beside Dinah, the little girl was playing with a lapful of green pease and listening in wide-eyed

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

delight to the story of "De possum dat had gawn to de frolic."

The child's supper of bread and milk and soft-boiled eggs having been duly administered, her nightly toilet performed, and she having thereupon been tucked into her cosey little bed, in spite of many tearful protests and passionate prayers to be allowed to wait up for "dear, sweet Papa," Rose, the evening being cool, sat down by the bright flames of the parlor gas-log and resumed her eternal and profitless dreams.

That she should be unoccupied was no unusual thing, nor was she unaccustomed to being alone, yet there was something dissatisfied and sullen about her face, and she cast now and then nervous little glances over her shoulder as if apprehensive of something.

Everything had been going wrong, from money upward, with her and Lōic, and since their arrival in New York—bringing along what capital he had been able to scrape together from that wreck of his finances so truly prophesied by Gäidik—disappointments and embarrassments had gathered thickly around them.

It was altogether Lōic's fault, Rose thought in her gentle gratitude; but she was past finding consolation in this reflection—her usual solace! She had no faith in his power of remaking a fortune with horses—horses even as a means of livelihood were more than ever detestable to her—and she would have liked him to invest the poor little nest-egg lying at a Wall Street bank in some more solid commercial venture, but he was absurdly proud, was Lōic—according to her ideas, at least—and strongly opposed to her views of the case. He had told her with his brave smile to make herself quite happy, to leave things to him, and to go on living in what comfort he could procure for her and Kikette while he be-

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

stirred himself, a statement which she had greeted with a mournful sigh and a deluge of apprehensive tears, ending in a "*Dieu merci!* your mother can't live forever with her delicate health!" which had brought about her ears a long-remembered flare of the celebrated Kergoat temper.

This was soon after their arrival in America, at a time when their affairs were behaving in a peculiarly mercurial and distressing fashion, and when, still bewildered by the novelty of everything around her, she was convinced that they would have done better to have remained in Europe, and, even at the cost of every conceivable humiliation, to have accepted the help of those among his family and friends who were still ready to proffer it.

In fact, the humiliation was not obvious to her mind at all, only to Lóic's. "Look here, Rose," he had said, "Gaidik is the only human being from whom, if matters ever come to that point, I shall consent to take a sou. In the mean while I do not propose to play the part of poor relation and to take a back seat on the scene of my former affluence. Here in America—which is the land for people of daring and energy—I can work and await the time when the clouds will roll away, so don't say anything more about what you don't understand."

Rose sat long before the burning gas-log, but at last she heard the grating of a latch-key in the outer door, and, jumping to her feet, ran into the hall preceded by Teuss to meet her handsome Marquis-lover—now plain "Meester Kergoat"—as she pronounced it! He looked weary and a trifle harassed.

"Have you dined?" she asked, as, throwing off his light covert-coat he turned towards his bedroom, his spurs clinking softly at every step.

"No, of course not. I came straight from the riding-school, and if you have something warm to give me I

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

sha'n't be sorry, for I'm dog-tired and I had nothing but a sandwich at noon."

"All right, I'll get it ready; but why do you trouble to dress? You are not going out again, are you? Put on your slippers and your smoking-jacket."

"Not a bit of it. You know that I hate those slipshod ways; besides, I may have to go down-town again—worse luck!"

"Oh-h-oh!" This dolefully, and then, after a pause, "Let me bring you some brandy; it will cheer you up."

"No, no, not before I've eaten something." The protest came back from a distance amid a clatter of impatiently-drawn-off boots and creaking boot-jacks; but Rose, quietly stubborn, made a bee-line for the dining-room cellarette, and, pouring out a brimming wineglassful of liqueur-brandy, brought it to him in the hope that it would put him in a more rosy temper. To urge stimulants upon him was part of her policy. If she was in a gay mood, she considered that it insured his being responsive, while if, as usual, she wanted to grumble and complain, she hoped it would keep him quiet and enable her, therefore, to do so undisturbed. As soon as she was certain that he had swallowed the drink down to the last drop, she disappeared to get what she was pleased to call his dinner, for, it being Dinah's night out, she had to take this care upon herself.

Half an hour later, Lœic, in faultless evening dress, was seated at table before a couple of poached eggs—served in the little tin pan wherein they had been cooked—a bottle of beer, and some cold remains of chicken promiscuously piled upon a chipped plate from the handsome Dresden "onion-pattern" service bought by himself only two months before—a transaction which this

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

man, brought up to eat off Sèvres and gold-plate, had considered praiseworthy economical.

The cloth was stained with jam at the place marked by Kikette's high-chair, the uncut loaf, flanked by a kitchen carving-knife, basked upon the cloth in lazy disregard of the silver basket reserved for its use, the dainty little jardinière containing ferns which Lœic had selected looked withered and dusty for lack of proper care, and, the gas being out of order in the dining-room, two tin kitchen candlesticks with guttering candles adorned the wrinkled centre of the table. Rose, sour-faced and corsetless, clad in a once white wrapper, without a collar, trailing half a yard of frayed lace frill dismally behind her, came in from the pantry pressing a dish of cheese and a carafe of claret against her heart.

"My dear girl," Lœic said, wearily, "why do you let things go like that?" He looked wretchedly ill at ease and out of his element, and as he glanced around him a flush of shame rose to the very roots of his hair. "Surely," he continued, gently, "you could get Dinah to water the ferns, put fresh napery on the table, and prepare a lamp when the gas is restive."

"She can't do everything," Rose replied, sulkily, "and what does it matter, anyway—we are poor people now, we don't need to put on airs."

"Well, soap and water don't cost much. Look at your dressing-gown. I hate to find fault, but it is an abomination, Rose! I cannot imagine how you can bear to wear such a thing, especially since you still have lots of nice clothes." He had pushed his sorry meal aside, and was lighting a cigarette at one of the disgraceful candles, his brows knit in a frown which even his desire to avoid a scene could not quite smooth away.

"Oh, my peignoir is well enough," she replied, sitting

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

down sideways on Kikette's chair and beginning to bite the meat off a chicken-bone which she held in her fingers.

"Damn it all, haven't you had your dinner?" he asked, angrily. "It's past nine o'clock! What have you been about?"

"Don't get angry, Løic," she replied, her mouth full. "I ate the rest of Kikette's bread and milk and one of her eggs. I'm not hungry."

"Really, Rose, this is too bad!" he exclaimed, dashing his cigarette viciously upon his half-filled plate. "I want you to eat properly, and when I am not here to get Dinah to serve your meals in a Christian fashion. What do you suppose she thinks of such doings? And my poor little Kikette, is all this a proper training for her?"

Rose flushed, and, eager to turn the conversation from what she knew by experience to be a peculiarly perilous topic, set down the half-gnawed bone and offered to go and make Løic a cup of coffee.

"Oh, keep still — coffee is an 'after-dinner' refreshment," he said, with light sarcasm. "I don't need any!"

"Well, then, take some Chartreuse, at least." And, rising again before he could prevent her, she placed before him the temptingly arrayed cellarette and poured him out a most unusually imposing bumper of the above-named liqueur, which he absently began to sip.

"The box from Gäidik arrived this afternoon," she resumed, cutting herself a slice of cheese and beginning to munch it without bread. "I did not open it, since you forbade me."

Løic, at the name of Gäidik, had instinctively set down his glass, and the color brought by annoyance and the first swallows of the fiery liquid to his tanned face slowly ebbed away again.

"All right," he said, quickly. "I'll see to it by-and-

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

by. Meanwhile I might as well tell you that I've rented a place in the country, a very pretty old place but little over an hour from town, with lots of pastureland, a quaint old house, where you and Kikette will be very comfortable, and good stable accommodation for the horses I am going to take for training and breaking-in. You had best begin soon to pack up, for we must leave here before the end of the month."

Rose heard him out dismally, her face gradually puckering up into a menace of tears. She was not sufficiently alert to keep up with Lōic's rapid flight of thoughts and plans, and she looked bewildered in her short-witted indolence.

"Are you in earnest?" she asked, her lips trembling, her remaining bit of cheese held in mid-air between the table-cloth and her mouth.

"In the deadliest earnest," he replied, in the half-mocking tone which he never did learn to lay completely aside.

"You really are going to become a trainer?"

"Certainly; it's the only thing I can do!" he exclaimed, with dawning impatience. "This riding-school business is heart-breaking. We are a lot of poor devils there—three or four smashed-up Aristocrats like myself, and five or six German and Austrian ex-cavalry officers—all trying to make a living by teaching young ladies and fat old gentlemen to ride, on commission. I do not, in spite of my working like a dog, make much more at this game than what pays for my cigarettes and the 'treats' I am forced to squander upon a lot of hangers-on and would-be patrons. When our money is gone, what shall we do, please?"

There was a little pause. Rose's tears had begun to flow, and Lōic was looking fixedly out of the window, through which, far below the terrace-like avenue whereon

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

the house was built, the myriad lights of the enormous city gleamed like armies of glowworms on a background of suffused darkness.

"What objection can you have to my idea?" he asked, suddenly.

Rose raised her head and looked at him in resentful sullenness. Her hair had partially slipped from its moorings, and the yellow glow of the candles fell upon her insignificant face and streaming eyes.

"I'm afraid of it, Lōic," she sniffed. "I'm sure it will turn out badly."

"Well, you're a cheerful young lady!" Lōic said, rising and walking to her side. "Don't be foolish, my girl," he added, soothingly, gently patting her shoulder. "I want to make some money—it will be a novel and exhilarating experience to me; besides, it is absolutely necessary that I should do so." Then, bending over the nearest candle to light a fresh cigarette, he continued: "This interdiction devised by my estimable Uncle Paul, and duly carried out by seven carefully chosen members of my family, prevents me from touching a penny of the revenues to which I am entitled until my mother's death, as you very well know. All my available capital is gone, all excepting what remains of the forty thousand dollars I brought here. That is why I insisted upon coming to America; that is why I want to become a trainer, why I don't mind confessing to a low greed of gain, and why, also, I ask you, Rose, to be brave and to help me as much as you can, for you and I have begun badly—badly as the most evilly romantic might desire." And he looked at her with one of his most winning smiles, but Rose did not move, and his face grew grave and stern again, to conceal a throb of utter misgiving and discouragement.



PRINCE PAUL

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

"I am afraid you don't understand," he said, shrugging his shoulders, "so let us go and open Gaidik's box." There was the old yearning tenderness in his voice as he pronounced his sister's name, and he led the way into the next room with a tired, dispirited step.

Geneviève de Kergoat had taught her son that "Self"—with a huge capital "S"—and self alone reigns in the world, and upon this principle he had acted for a time, after a fashion; but long ere this he had discovered to his cost that for people of his and of Gaidik's stamp this amiable theory was untenable, and that its broad cynicism was lamentably erroneous. Better would it have been for both, nevertheless, if they could have put it in practice, since now their two lives were irretrievably saddened, their hopes shattered, and their hearts sore with the inconsolable pain of their separation. Too late Lóic had recognized the full extent of his folly, but he never let that be noticed, and, although he felt bitter against Rose, yet as he bent with hammer and chisel above the square, deal case addressed in Gaidik's firm, distinct writing, he refrained from any chiding in his abhorrence for hurting anybody's feelings, though Rose, sullen and resentful, certainly did not deserve such forbearance.

The lid removed, Lóic with tender fingers was beginning to push gently aside the folds of tissue-paper covering the contents of the box, when he abruptly stopped.

"Kikette must see this!" he exclaimed.

"You are not going to wake her up, are you?" queried Rose, peevishly. "She'll never want to go to sleep again." But he had already left the room, where he reappeared a few minutes later carrying the deliciously flushed and delighted little maid wrapped in a swan's-down-lined dressing-gown, and with azure slippers on her rosy feet.

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

"There now, my pet," he said, triumphantly, setting her down amid a nest of sofa-cushions, "we will see what there is for you in there." And with sudden energy he set to work unfolding paper after paper and exhibiting with boyish pleasure each object to his tiny daughter.

"What can there be in this long package?" Rose asked, suddenly—"the one tied with pink ribbons?"

Lôic did not at once reply, but handled the long, narrow box for a few seconds in silence, his eyes curiously attentive and grave. As he turned back the inner cover, the light from the chandelier shone upon a length of handsome, silver-gray silk accompanied by a generous allowance of exquisitely embroidered dress trimmings, topped by dainty gloves and lace handkerchiefs. At length he looked up.

"See what those things say for themselves," he said, in a queer, changed voice; "they are obviously for you," and he handed the open carton to Rose. He was deeply touched, and his whole expression was softened and genuinely happy while he resumed the unpacking of the wealth of lovely things still half filling the deep chest and heaped them around Kikette, who at each new surprise loudly shouted for joy.

It was nearly midnight when at last the end of the display was reached, and Lôic, much to Kikette's disgust, snatched her away from her new treasures and bore her to her satin-lined crib, promising to sing her to sleep.

"Papa," she said, a little later, in her pretty, uncertain English, and patting his cheeks with both her chubby hands, "you is not miserable wretched—is you?"

"No, sweetheart—why?" he asked, in astonishment.

"Because oor eyes is all damp while oo sing, and I was finking p'rhaps you is sorry Auntie Gàid is not here wif us."

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

And just then at the door Rose appeared, saying, plaintively, "I told you, Lōic, she wouldn't go to sleep again." Then to Kikette, in angry tones: "You are a very naughty little girl. Papa's grog will be all cold."

There was no doubt about Lōic's punishment being a severe one, and none knew this better than himself. Nevertheless, there were not many things that had power really to cast him down, and, thanks to this, the miseries of the past years had altered him less than might have been expected. He was meant for luxury, great wealth, the glitter of every magnificence. He had none of these things now, but he was still the brave, dashing Lōic of old, and he threw himself body and soul into his installation at "Cinnamon Hill"—for such was the spicy name of the place selected for his new venture. Working day and night, packing up, travelling to and fro, seeing people at impossible hours, returning to his dismantled apartment long after midnight, tired out but still full of hope, he completed his preparations with unimpaired good-humor, and finally, on a stormy afternoon, when wind and rain were doing their best to wreck the beauty of the spring woods, he and his little *Smala* landed at the big, long-uninhabited house which was to be yet another home to them.

Not as easily as he had at first thought had he succeeded in obtaining horses to train, but he based great expectations upon six or seven raw broncoes purchased from a bunch offered for sale by some speculative cow-boys on an unbuilt Harlem block. These were good material and cheap, for, as he said, confidently and very truthfully to Rose, "there are few people who'd care to tackle and break in that sort of cattle."

The house stood high-perched on a narrow ridge of well-timbered ground, commanding long views of rolling

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

meadows alternating with the lighter green of newly clad trees. To the east wended one broad, macadamized road, and to the west another identical one, disfigured by the slender wires and tall pillars of electric car-lines. At the foot of the sloping and neglected garden there was a small pond, of excellent use for horses, and beyond the stables and barn a distant view of the bay was glimpsed from the grassy southward brow of the hill above the flat roofs of two or three other villas, which also had long since seen their day, and were now rented at prices which would have made their original millionaire owners turn in their graves.

The fact that the whole locality had gone hopelessly out of fashion, however, was scarcely a trouble to Lõic, who, beaming with pride, kept repeating, "Fifty dollars a month for over forty acres and a house full of twenty-foot rooms and forty-foot salons; isn't that dirt cheap?"

To be sure, these once gorgeous apartments were rather ghastly of aspect in their present nakedness. The gilding of the cornices had turned to a dingy brown, the wall-papers were faded and sun-eaten beyond belief, and the *tout-ensemble* spoke loudly of that artistically dispiriting era, the modern past. Also, in this stormy weather the out-door advantages were not evident, though only a day before a glance through the rickety window-frames would have fallen upon sloping lawns blue with violets under the May sunshine, fringed with purple lilac and as yet flowerless syringa, and punctuated with delicious tangles of leaf and blossom which represented long-forgotten flower-beds, relapsing into exquisite, untutored nature. There were dark, clean-smelling pines to contrast with the paler tints of elms and maples, and an orchard of pink-and-white bloom that canopied silvery Stars-of-Bethlehem and yellow daffodils beneath, all of

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

which was cause for much rejoicing, according to Lõic, whose spirited description reconstructed the landscape almost as well as the sun would have done. But Rose, seated on a packing-case in the immense drawing-room, refused to find consolation in such nonsensical trifles, and almost rivalled the extraordinarily heavy rain beating against the cloudy panes by the flood of tears to which she gave way, in spite of a for-once-genuine desire not to annoy Lõic and upset Kikette, who was wildly dancing with joy at being let loose in this great, bare house.

"Come, come, Rose—cheer up, my girl!" Lõic cried, gayly, "this place will be a perfect little paradise when once we have put it to rights." He was kneeling before the cavernous chimney and lighting what he termed a "camp-fire" with a deftness which did him the greatest credit. "Wait and see what can be done with it before you give way like that," he continued, his cheery voice half lost in the roar of the crackling wood and the whistling of the wind descending like an avalanche down the flue.

"I'm not good at arranging rooms," whimpered Rose. "I'm not clever, like you, Lõic."

"For which you may thank a gracious Providence," he interposed, stepping back a pace to admire his handiwork. "Clever chaps like me are what the generality of people call fools; but there, take Kikette up-stairs. John, my Irish acquisition and general factotum, has lighted a roarer in your bedroom, and as soon as his better half has succeeded in making the kitchen range work down-stairs, I'll bring you a cup of tea to set up your nerves and warm you to the occasion."

There is something in a gentleman's nature that predisposes him to leniency towards a mental and social inferior, and when that inferior is a small woman, for whose

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

sake—out of a mistaken sense of honor—one has sacrificed all, the feeling is intensified and helps a man like L^oic to *prendre son mal en patience*. And yet when Rose departed, preceded by the merrily echoing laughter of Kikette, his look pursued her; he drew in his breath sharply, and paused for a few seconds on the brink, as it were, of this new life, looking drearily far beyond the chasm separating him from the past, a chasm wherein he had sunk everything that he most valued and loved, retaining but one joy, one hope, one *raison d'être*—Kikette!

Dusk was falling outside, and the big, gloomy room was illumined fitfully by the rising and falling flames in the cracked, white marble chimney-piece, and through a window which he had just thrown open, to get rid of some wholly superfluous smoke wreaths, the rain-soaked air entered, laden with that singular feeling of enervating relaxation and limpness which some steadily falling spring showers bring in their softly murmuring train. A scent of lilac reached him, stabbing him to the heart with all the bitter poignancy of the familiar thing under alien and unfriendly skies. Abruptly he squared his shoulders. "Come, come, my lad," he muttered, with set teeth, "none of that!" And with a little shiver he turned again to his work.

His scanty furniture, which was even then being brought in by the van-men, made a disappointingly small display. It had looked quite sumptuous in the Harlem *Bonbonnière*, but here— He contemplated it gravely, yet already, with something like humor dawning in his eyes (he and G^aidik were like that—they never found anything that daunted them for long), once more the man, whose only care it was how to make things comfortable for Kikette and Rose. This, under the immediate circumstances, was a question of some magnitude; but the

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

next morning found him whistling merrily in the midst of a much-reduced chaos, from which, as the days went by, he speedily and capably evolved a well-ordered establishment, that, if planned on a very humble scale, still bade fair to blossom later on into what he confidently expected would prove a rattling success.

Rose, infected by so much bravery and good temper, did her best at first—alas! it was not much—to help him. She was, unfortunately, sorely handicapped by her inability to speak English fluently—although for one usually so dull she was perfecting herself in this extremely anti-Latin language with great rapidity—and, moreover, she had no one to consult about the management of a comparatively large household on strange shores, no one to whom she could turn for advice. She had to work it out by herself, and it happened that this young woman could scarcely be classed among those who are sufficient unto themselves, strong to hold to their purpose, to subdue their weaknesses and keep silent about their failures. She therefore ended by seeing nothing but what she called the cruelty of her own life, which to her had now lost all its gilded romance, and was all plain facts and arid duties. She had never been brilliant or amusing; now she went about her new tasks with an air of enforced resignation somewhat galling to behold, spoke in a subdued voice, and evidently considered herself to be a victim deserving of much pity.

Four months elapsed, and the excitement created by the installation of the little family and of a stableful of horses had long subsided. Things took an every-day course, and Lōic was still in daily expectation of the tremendous success he had predicted for his venture. Having left behind him home, wealth, and love, he was, nevertheless, facing discomfort, anxiety, and the pos-

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

sibility of failure with an entirely unruffled brow. He did not permit himself to contemplate the dangers that lay ahead, and kept his high courage intact, although his view of the future perhaps erred on the side of confidence, considering the host of parasites that had now assembled around him to practise upon his open heart and open hand—a motley crew of famished European exiles, who, having once hoped to achieve their ambitious aims in the equine line of business, had miserably tumbled into drink and evil ways.

They formed a harassing pack of decently clad mendicants, and descended upon him at all hours under the pretext of canvassing for customers, but in reality to swallow multifarious liquors beneath the drooping wistaria blossoms of the saddlery veranda, their boots elevated to a level with their noses upon the creeper-grown railing, and smoke oozing from their lips in lazy clouds. They one and all recognized that *Le Patron*—as they called Lōic—was a remarkable horseman, the best judge of cattle, and the finest trainer they had ever encountered, and decided that by attaching themselves to him they had a very fair chance of retrieving their fallen fortunes. He himself, if the truth must be told, was amused in his loneliness by their ready banter; perhaps a little pleased, too, by the flattery and deference with which they so lavishly and, after a fashion, cleverly fenced him in; and even when, having imbibed too freely of his generously poured first-class beverages, they grew somewhat noisy, he did not have the heart to send them packing, and merely shrugged his shoulders indulgently.

Among connoisseurs Lōic was well-known already as an expert. Always admirably horsed, his saddlery exhibiting the newest improvements, his stables abounding with the newest things out in the way of sanitation

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

and fittings—in spite of their old-fashioned inconvenience of build—his stock fed as no dealer ever dreamed of feeding his, he commanded their applause and admiration, although they shook doleful heads over the business aspects of his venture, contending, with some reason, that one could run an establishment in such a way for pleasure, but not for gain. This aristocratic dealer and trainer, who showed them around his paddocks, clad in irreproachable riding-gear and mounted on his favorite hunter, *Murmur*, a magnificent dapple-gray, possessed of a fine, bold eye and an inexpressibly difficult temper, almost awed them. They did not understand him. He was so unwilling, apparently, to push a bargain, so royally ready to meet a customer half-way, and so idiotically eager to point out the defects of the horses he had for sale. A gentleman—ah, they should rather think so; but a successful seller of horseflesh—hum! hum! that was a different story altogether.

Who on earth was he, anyhow? Some began to think him a Royal Prince in disguise, exiled for deep political reasons; but why was he married—for married they naturally believed him to be—to such a singular little person? Mrs. Kergöat—they generally pronounced it “Cur-gote,” which always sent Löic into fits of laughter—did not appeal either to the American element around her or to her Lord’s exotic parasites. Several among the latter “smelt a rat,” as they gracefully expressed it, and looked at each other with covert smiles of scornful amusement when she spoke of her “usban”—ex-gentlemen these, who before yielding, greatly to their detriment, to an unquenchable thirst for whiskey-and-water (say a thimbleful of cold water to a tumbler of spirits), had seen much of the world on both sides of the herring-pond. No beauty, no wit, not a single talent, no *chic*, no *savoir-*

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

faire, no monde. "They" knew better than to think such a woman capable of ever having successfully played the matrimonial card; but there was the child, and even their sodden brains and toughened hearts could understand that wellnigh any sacrifice could be made for the sake of such a perfect little creature. Time had not only intensified in Kikette that resemblance to Gäidik in feature and coloring of which her father was so proud, but had even added further likenesses of bearing and character that brought his love for her to the point of slavish adoration.

"Isn't she the image of Gäidik?" he said to Rose one morning, when he had brought his little maid round to the house riding a Shetland pony the size of a big dog. She sat in her saddle like a Royal Princess, and her whole attitude, her inexpressibly amusing air of superb self-possession and ease, were so comically like her aunt's that he stepped back a little to look his fill at her.

Rose, leaning over the piazza rail, frowned heavily—any mention of Gäidik always brought that expression to her face—and contemptuously shrugged her shoulders, which movement brought Lóic's attention her way.

"What are you frowning about?" he asked, irritably. "Have I said anything to offend you?"

"No-o-o," she drawled, gazing superciliously at the little girl and pony, "but one might think that you are glad she is so unlike me."

He stared, for although well aware of Rose's rancorous jealousy, yet lately she had fallen into the habit of carrying this unpleasant defect a little too far. Scarcely could she endure his speaking to any other woman; and as there was a bevy of madcap girls in the neighborhood, all of them thoroughly smitten with him and making up to him in the funniest and most barefaced manner, her

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

black looks and sulks greatly complicated an already sufficiently vexatious situation; but to have her so openly show her antipathy for Gäidik was somewhat *de trop*, and his frown more than matched her own as he replied:

"If you like to take it like that you have my permission to do so, but let me tell you that jealous women are a nuisance, and that I am not minded to stand much more of your bullying in that direction."

"I'll never get accustomed to see you flirt with every petticoat you meet," she said, aggressively, flicking wrathfully at the delicate tendrils of the superb honeysuckle which made that old piazza a thing of beauty.

"Be careful what you say, Rose," he whispered, bending towards her; and, as Kikette started her pony away at a foot-pace towards the orchard, he added, in a louder voice, "And remember that years ago I warned you that fidelity was not among the promises I was ready to make to you; it's not in my line!" Then he turned to follow the child.

He was thoroughly angry, and his face was still as black as thunder when he caught up with her.

"There's two gentlemen, Sor, come to have a look round," his head-groom said, running towards him at that moment. "Be aisy, Sor," he continued, "if ye mane to show them *Flying Fox* to-day; begor, he's acting like a divil intoirely, wid his wicked eye onclosed."

The two "gentlemen" were a stout individual with a large, clean-shaven face, whereon "horse-dealer" was plainly written, and a tall, lanky man of the same professional stamp, whose bibulous countenance was illumined by small, shrewd brown eyes. Both wore breeches and gaiters, and each raised one finger to their respective Glengarry caps in salutation as Lõic approached.

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

"What can I do for you?" asked the latter, rather shortly, for he was still thinking of Rose's taunts.

"Well, Governor," the stout one replied, in a loud, affable voice, "we've come to look round your hunters; we need some nice, workman-like nags, and we thought that maybe you could oblige us."

"Is it for yourself?" Lōic asked, and, as he expected, found out that it was not, but was meant for a couple of "friends" of the would-be purchasers, who wanted "something handsome to carry a rider pleasantly, clever across country, with a good turn of speed," etc., etc.

"We'll walk around the stables first," Lōic proposed, leading the way, "and then we can go on to the galloping ground, where I have a few good made-up leaping-places."

"That's a very likely animal!" shouted the broad-shouldered man. "What's his figure, Governor?" and he pointed to a rather leggy thorough-bred colt, slightly over sixteen hands, sidling and backing restlessly in the yard, where a groom was exercising him by hand. This was *Flying Fox*, and he certainly looked just then as if he had "his wicked eye onclosed!"

"That's scarcely what I'd call a pleasant carrier," Lōic objected, smilingly quoting from the demand made upon his stables. "Not a bad-shaped one, as you can see for yourselves—although there's a trifle too much daylight under him—but very hot-tempered and fidgety. Do you really want to see him moving?"

"Yes, I must say I would," was the reply, and *Flying Fox* was a few minutes later, with difficulty, prevailed upon to accompany the other horses, now being led out, to a large pasture wherein Lōic had caused a few hurdles, a couple of doubles, an Irish-bank, and a respectably high, loose stone wall to be erected.

One after the other he put his sale-hunters over the

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

jumps at steeplechasing speed, and finally ranged alongside of the two visitors.

"Before we decide, we must see that bay colt have a shy at the 'leps,'" remarked the stout dealer, evidently an Irishman, although he put on all the British "side" he could.

"Very good, I'll give him a bit of a round first to take the edge off his temper," Lõic said, preparing to exchange the filly he was riding for the excited steeplechaser just then tearing and snatching at his bit and dancing round and round his groom as if treading on red-hot plates. In a second more he had the bay well in hand and was flying down the field, sitting squarely in the saddle, as serenely composed as if he were occupying a well-cushioned arm-chair.

The stout dealer slapped his leg enthusiastically. "Bedad that's a rider worth two!" he said, nudging his companion, and at that moment Lõic put his animal into a stretching gallop and headed him for the leaps. The first was a tall fence, laced high and stiff with thorn, and Lõic loosened *Flying Fox* to his full will. No question here of whip or spur. The horse's grand stride swept along till his hoofs seemed scarcely to touch the ground, and with the smooth flight of a swallow he rose to the jump, landed clear, and sped on straight as an arrow towards the other obstacles.

A few minutes only had gone by in that splendid flight, and *Flying Fox* was racing as gamely and as fast as at the first hedge, past the gate to the pine-wood, past the paddock rails and the broad, silvery trunks of the tall beech-trees overshadowing the down track, when suddenly Kikette, fired by her father's example, escaped from John's custody and charged on her little pony to meet him. Lõic's shout of warning came too late, for,

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

frightened by the steeplechaser's thundering onrush, the Shetland shied violently, pitching the little maid head-foremost right into the middle of the course, and almost beneath *Flying Fox* iron-shod feet. In the age-long instant that followed, some of the on-lookers turned away their heads, others, who stared with a terrible fixed fascination to see the child trampled—for the horse was at his utmost burst of speed and there was no time to turn—saw, almost simultaneously with Kikette's fall, Lōic swing down and forward from the saddle, Cossack-fashion, and barely snatch her from beneath the galloping hoofs.

There was a moment's silence while the colt swept by, then as his rider reined him in, and, turning, came back bearing the little girl safe and sound upon his saddle-bow, all hands rushed forward as by one impulse with frantic yells of applause. Lōic dismounted into the hubbub, outwardly—despite the extreme pallor of his face—calm and impassive as ever, but really with deaf ears and unseeing eyes. It does not fall to the lot of every man to pit his own skill and sinew against the iron hand of death for all that is left to him of life and love!

As for the two dealers, their enthusiasm knew no bounds. *Flying Fox*, whom Lōic surrendered with great reluctance, was only one of a bunch of horses that they purchased. Then declaring with much pungency and picturesqueness that they had never met with an occasion that presented so many indubitable and pressing indications for drink, they settled down to make a day of it, and departed late at night in a state of mushy and maudlin sentiment, swearing to recommend to as many of their confrères as possible "thish truly ad'm'r'ble 'shtablishm't."

CHAPTER XXII

Black storm! black storm! and below the weight
Of whelming surge doth the battered bark
Drive like an arrow sped by Fate
At the heart of the roaring dark.
Dim Shapes leap up from the keel beneath
And whitely grin with their baffled teeth,
Or shouldering heavily, huge and tall,
Poise, curve, and crash like a shattered wall.
Oh sing confusion of sight and sound
Closed in the core of a hissing swound!
And gasp, if the blood course red and warm
In the unchilled veins,
Black storm!

M. M.

SNOW was falling softly and relentlessly, falling as it never falls in France, and the thermometer was something below zero. This winter, the first of their stay in America, was unusually severe, and the present storm—the tail-end of a blizzard blown over from the Far West—had been for two days steadily drifting in exhaustless clouds past the frozen window-panes. Every tree in the grounds had on its leeward side a high, narrow wedge of accumulated snow tailing off to a sharp point, and the white monotony of the landscape—where it was visible—the sense of isolation conveyed by the impenetrable atmosphere lay like lead upon Rose's heart as she paced nervously up and down the long, cold drawing-room, wrapped in a fleecy shawl of pink-and-white Algerian silk, which had been included in the huge Christmas-box sent by Gäidik.

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

Affairs had not been going well after all with the trio at Cinnamon Hill, thanks to an inconceivable streak of bad luck, two horses having died of pneumonia, and a handsome pair of trotters having run away from John, after that worthy's indulging in a drop too much of "the cratur," with the result that both had injured themselves past healing and had had to be shot. These were very serious losses, and had strained Lōic's slender resources to the uttermost, as Rose bitterly reflected while sniffing at the lingering aroma of tobacco and spirits that gave the room a slightly dissipated fragrance, which no amount of airing could dispel. There was a pitiful lack of femininity there, no dainty hand had draped the rigid green curtains made of some pretty material bought by Lōic at a clearing-sale, the few pictures and photographs hung more or less lopsidedly on the endless area of faded paper, and no pretty little work-basket or stray bit of embroidery enlivened the tables, upon which books, pipes, cigarette-boxes, unemptied ash-trays and sporting journals lay in hopeless confusion. Rose was not the woman to make home "homelike," or to spread comfort about her, and yet she wondered why Lōic came back reluctantly to it—even when having eaten but a flying meal wherever business had taken him—so thoroughly tired out and dispirited that he fell asleep with his boots and spurs still on in the first convenient chair.

She looked very limp and forlorn in her ill-made gown of brown flannel and her exquisite shawl—already torn and stained in three or four places—as she wandered back and forth trying to think where the money was to come from to pay household expenses. The bills lately had been running on at a terrific rate. The butcher's and grocer's were gigantic, the milkman—a crabbed personage, with a face which Lōic claimed was bound to

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

sour his wares—had been openly rude to her when she had asked him to await the end of the month for settlement of his interminable *mémoire*. This was not, however, Rose's most pressing trouble, she had another which she hugged to her bosom with vindictive persistency, making of it an excuse for all her own delinquencies—namely, her ever-increasing and not always entirely causeless jealousy.

Lôic was no saint, as he himself candidly avowed. Moreover, he had warned her in all frankness at the beginning of their sorry liaison that he intended—knowing himself as he did—to remain complete master of his actions. He would—that he had promised and very nobly kept—be kind and generous to her, she would be his first care, and she had been so always, save for little Kikette. Since their arrival in America, he had repeatedly implored her to marry him, in order to terminate an awkward situation and legitimize the child, and it was she who had most stubbornly and to him incomprehensibly refused, declining to give her reasons for so extraordinary a course of conduct, but adhering to it with sullen obstinacy. He had been loyal, therefore, and more than loyal to his engagements, but her martyr-mind would not admit this, and she considered herself deeply injured whenever a pretty face appeared above her narrow horizon. As a helpmate Rose was, alas, next to useless, and any illusions which Lôic might ever have entertained as to the possibility of training and educating her to a higher level had long since been dispelled. During the days of past prosperity she had shown some little adaptability in aping the styles of dress and manner of a certain "smart" class of women, and had imagined herself to be quite a model of elegance, but adversity had brought her down with a rush to a point very much

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

below that ambitious high-water mark, and in the process she had lost, or at all events chosen to discard, even that neatness and housewifely practicality which so strongly characterize the French bourgeoisie. Both ways she was now a *déclassé*, and the girl who had worn cheap, gay dresses and had travelled in her mother's wake to horse-shows and sea-side resorts during intervals of competent shop-tending, or the fine madam who had donned Worth tea-gowns at ten o'clock in the morning, in no way resembled the crushed, resentful, peevish, unhappy woman now pacing the floor behind those snow-blinded windows.

Kikette was up-stairs playing with Mrs. John's two little girls, as was testified by the loud bumps and bounds overhead, and the loud yells of joy which now and again rent the muffled silence of the big house. Daylight was rapidly fading, and with a shiver Rose threw a log on the dying fire and began to light the lamps—for gas, of course, there was none in this old-fashioned modernity of a dwelling. Just as she was fitting to a none-too carefully polished lamp-globe its frayed and much-battered, frilled shade, the jingle of spurs and the creaking of a door made her turn round to see Lōic enter, accompanied by Teuss.

"Never heard of such luck in my life!" he said, wearily, throwing his fur-lined top-coat on a sofa, and walking to the fire, which he kicked into something like brilliancy with the toe of his boot. "I'd made sure I would win back a lot of what I had lost by selling *Mirza* and *Ali*, next month, and, now they're both down with the flue. Caught cold in those rattle-trap stables, and it'll be a miracle if I pull them through."

Rose groaned, and, sinking on a chair near the table, exclaimed, dismally:

"Are you sure that they have really got influenza?"

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

"Sure as fate! I don't know what I'll have to do! Chuck up the whole thing most likely, for I'm about stone broke."

"What do you mean by that?" she asked again, in the same doleful voice.

"It's not hard to understand, I should think!" he retorted, with another kick at the logs. "At the end of my tether, that's what I am, put in plain language. The money at the bank is at an end, and there are the debts which must come to—I'm damned if I know to how much—I never thought I'd be dishonorable enough to run into debt; but the devil's against me, and I don't think I can pull out this trip."

He threw his cigarette into the fire with an air of finality, which made her quake where she cowered on her low chair.

"And what am I to do about the bills and the servant's wages and the feedman and the rent? The agent has already been here three times, and he is threatening to turn us out," she moaned, rising and drawing nearer to him with hands imploringly out-stretched, as if expecting to have him fill them with a shower of gold.

"How am I to know!" he repeated, savagely. "We owe money everywhere it seems to me. Sharp & Cutting, the grocer-butchers or butcher-grocers, if you prefer it that way, are threatening to sue me if I don't give them at once a substantial sum—listen to that—a substantial sum, so if I don't hand it over—!"

"It's all your fault, anyhow," gulped Rose, "with your eternal procession of spongers who drink enough to float a ship, and are always dining or lunching here. Much do they care about us now!" She choked, and then continued, in a voice of despair, "And the neighbors, too; these Legrand girls who live here more than at their

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

own home, and whom you treat like Princesses, because they flatter you and grovel at your feet making calf's eyes."

Lôic, who was now pacing restlessly about the room, followed step by step by Teuss, the ever-faithful, flung round and faced her.

"Do you imagine that I am in a mood to listen to one of your jealous rhapsodies!" he said, fiercely. "Was it not you who landed the whole band upon my shoulders, because you wished to prevent that pretty little Mrs. Clifton, who hates them, from coming to learn to ride here. There's no harm in those Legrand girls. They are good-natured gawks, and were very kind to you when you were ill last month, and, what's more, they are much more your friends than mine."

"My friends!" Rose almost screamed; "my friends! They give me a limp handshake and an impertinent stare apiece when they arrive, and then cluster round you while I sit in the background or prepare refreshments for them. Nice friends, indeed!"

Lôic shrugged his shoulders contemptuously. "Since your mind appears to run on flirtations," he retorted, "I have intended to warn you for some time that it would behoove you to keep away from the yard. I have often a whole pack of people there that are not fit company for a decent woman! I'm not saying a word, mind you, against horsemen as a class. I know dozens worth their weight in gold, but those broken-down jocks and ex-head-grooms, whom I have to employ for the sake of cheapness, are in with a different lot, and I dislike your peregrinations to the stables at all hours."

"You let Kikette go there whenever she wants to!" Rose put in, acidly.

"Kikette! Just as if that had anything to do with

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

it! A baby—but with you it's different. I don't want to hurt your feelings, my girl, but you have a way of engaging them in a lively badinage which does not become my—my wife."

Rose turned crimson, for she did not dream that Lōic knew of those little visits to the yard, since they always took place when she thought him securely out of the way. She was perfectly aware that the fashion in which she brightened up on these occasions would have set his teeth on edge, but somehow or other she felt quite in her element there, she was free to giggle and gush and fish for compliments from these coarse-tongued men, who despised her, had she but known it, for a wretched, whimpering coward with horses, but found it politic to ingratiate themselves with "the Missus," and in that hope bandied vulgar witticisms and questionable repartees with her. She now glanced at Lōic apprehensively, for there was a metallic hardness in his eyes which spelled anger. The more she tried to explain now, the less he would believe her, and, afraid to make a muddle of the whole business, she tried to divert the current of his thoughts.

"Is it necessary to have six men permanently in the yard?" she asked, dolefully.

"Yes!"—in a tone of laconic severity that put an end to her hopes of provoking a discussion on this point.

Hastily changing her ground, she therefore tried again. "Why don't you write and ask your beloved sister to help you?"

This question had been thrashed threadbare many times, but for that very reason it might now serve to turn the conversation.

"Because I won't!" he replied, frowning. "She sent an extravagant lot of presents at Christmas, and a check

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

"for Kikette"—as she delicately put it—that paid all the back rent and many things besides. You could manage much better if you wanted to, but you have a slack hand and you are hopelessly unpractical. John's wife is the real backbone of this establishment. She alone keeps things together after a fashion."

"What am I to do when there is no money?" she asked, in tragic accents.

"Money has nothing to do with most of your neglects!" L^oic retorted, resuming his promenade up and down the room. "Poverty can be made much more endurable than you make it. I once saw a great lady, who, finding herself suddenly in far worse straits even than we are in now, became after a few months of hardly bought experience the most capable and graceful of common-sense housekeepers, and what's more she never complained or wept, but was always brave and cheery and anxious to make the best of everything."

Rose gave a disdainful shrug; she knew who he was alluding to, and this only added to her rancor. Straightening herself with an angry flounce—"You're in a position to cast blame on others, aren't you?" she sneered. "God, but I'm sick of it all!" she continued, with unwonted violence, for generally sulkiness and martyr-like postures were her favorite weapons. "If this sort of thing is what you brought me away from my home for, I wish you'd left me there! Even Uncle Lierre and Mamma were not as cruel as you are!"

An abrupt gesture of L^oic's cut short the rest of the tirade. "Your—your Mother—" he said, in a low voice, and stood as if transfixed, gazing at her in utter amazement.

Shortly after Kikette's birth a vilely written anonymous letter—no doubt the work of Malghorn or Rivier—

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

had acquainted him with the all-but-fatal tragedy in the marsh, and had filled him with almost insurmountable horror, but Rose was very ill at the time, indeed, her life and the baby's were hanging in the balance, and there could be no thought of interrogating her. Later on, a supreme feeling of delicacy, backed up by a natural disinclination to pursue the question, had constrained him to silence, although he had often wondered that she herself should not once have tried to discover whether her mother had really perished in that awful pit of quaking mud. Until to-day, neither her name nor that of her uncle had ever been uttered by Rose, and that she should invoke both on the present occasion, and in such a wise, staggered him completely.

Rose, who did not at all comprehend what was passing in his mind, stared at his extraordinarily harsh and contemptuous face, at first stupidly, then with growing fright. She had only seen him look like that on some very particular occasions, and her venomous little flame of rage went out with abject haste. "Don't be angry, *mon petit Lōic*," she begged. "I swear I didn't mean it! I'm sorry! I ought to have remembered that you are tired. Ah, yes, you are tired—you should have something to brace you up. *Voulez-vous un petit grog mon pauvre chien?*" and running to a corner-closet she hastened back holding a brimming glass of brandy, but with a gesture of disgust Lōic pushed it from him, and for a few seconds tragedy hung silently suspended in that bleak, shadow-filled room.

A violent ring at the front-door bell interrupted the scene.

"Heavens! is some one trying to tear down the house?" Rose cried, though her heart bounded with relief, and setting down the glass she ran towards the hall, where

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

she found Mrs. John in the act of admitting half a dozen girls, who, with loud laughs, were shaking the snow from their hoods and cloaks.

"Oh, my dear Mrs. Rose, don't be horrified at our unearthly appearance!" exclaimed their leader, an astonishingly tall, raw-boned damsel, with a pair of large, dark eyes and a set of beautiful teeth that lighted up frankly ugly features. She had the voice of an excited guinea-hen, and, rushing past her hostess, she advanced with immense strides towards Lōic with out-stretched hands, talking all the time. "Ha, I catch you tipping all by your own sweet self in the gloaming, My Lord!" Lōic, thoroughly unnerved, was gulping down the last drops of the brandy Rose had brought him, to conquer the sinking feeling that the worries of the day and the scene which had just taken place had brought about.

That sinking feeling was not new to him, nor, alas, was its hitherto infallible remedy!

"Can't me have a weenie little nippy, too?" continued the irrepressible damsel, squeezing his hand as if it had been shut in a door—her's were larger than his own and just as masculine—"me'se so vewy, vewy told," she continued, lisping in what she thought the most babyish and bewitching fashion, and then starting to dislocate her five-foot-eleven of flat-bosomed femininity in a sort of wild, impromptu dance, which she called her "French cang-cang."

"Bugler, bugler, sound the advance!" yelled her companions, invading the drawing-room with a musky flutter of skirts, and throwing at Lōic a shower of little snowballs which fell in every direction, and promptly began to melt on all the chairs and tables.

Reckless of mood and responding to the whip-lash of that insane bumper of raw spirits, he retaliated with a

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

handful of cards, picked up from the nearest arm-chair where Kikette had earlier in the day been building castles with them; and the fun became fast and furious, the volleys dying away in dropping shots after a heated engagement only through lack of ammunition, and after the sofa-cushions and even the sporting papers and books had been called into requisition. Chairs were upset, one curtain had been pulled down from its rod, and the empty whiskey-glass lay shivered to atoms upon the carpet.

Then there was a respite during which "Goosie" and "Tottie" and "Gussie" and "Gabbie" and especially "Carrie," their leader—also affectionately denominated "Monkey"—manfully partook of hot spirits-and-water, "Monkey" sitting kittenishly on the carpet at Lœic's feet, her big eyes upturned, assuring him that she felt like hugging him for being "such a dear, darling duck of an Aristocrat."

This flattering craving was not as mutual as Rose might have imagined, however, and, to tell the truth, Lœic felt a trifle disgusted as well as exceedingly ashamed that he had allowed himself to be inveigled into such fool's play, and greeted with positive relief the sudden appearance upon the scene of four boisterous and horsey gentlemen, loudly proclaiming that the car-lines being snowed-up, they were forced now to throw themselves upon their good friend's hospitality for the night.

Rose, with an agonized look, fled to investigate the preparations for dinner, while "Monkey," rising from the floor with a burst of hoydenish laughter, attacked one of them, her great chum, "Tommy-Tiddles," a diminutive Scotchman with very bright blue eyes and a very red face, asking him whether he was not in luck to find so charming a refuge in heathenish America. "A sweet place, like a regular corner of the old country, you

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

Scotch broth of a boy!" she cried, waltzing round him with Lōic's banjo, upon which she was beating as on a tambourine, raised high above her head. "And we, too, are all 'furriners' here assembled, Scotch and 'Oirish' and Frenchy and 'Dutch,'" she repeated, "the whole crew of us, not one lanky Yankee among us, my 'Tommy Tiddles!'" And encircling his little waist with her powerful arm, she lifted him from the floor, giggling hysterically.

"Oh, come, 'Monkey,' that's not fair!" interposed 'Tottie,' her face heated and her hair coming down in dishevelled tangles about her shoulders. "Don't you know that Lōic adores America?"—they all called him Lōic in moments of effusion.

"He don't!"

"You're both ungrammatical and wrong. He do!"

"No!"

"Yes!"

"No!"

"I appeal to 'hissel!'"

Lōic felt inclined to box their ears, but restraining this pardonable inclination, replied, quietly: "I do then! America is a first-class place to live in. I've found much kindness here and a long-sight better hearts than on the other side of the water. So there!"

"'Ear! 'Ear!" clamored half a dozen voices. "And what shall we 'ave after this wery nice 'armony?"

"Bravo, Lōic!" squealed the breathless little Scotchman, stamping his feet gleefully. "Bravo! Bravo!"

"Not at all bravo!" screamed "Monkey." "His 'Ludship' is most ungallant, and we will show our displeasure by instant departure. Our fond parents are waiting dinner for us, anyway," and beckoning, dramatically, to the rest of the girls scattered about the room, she

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

commanded: "Form into line! Now, one, two, three; one, two, three—mark time—to the right-about, forward, march!" And imitating between her half-closed teeth, with lamentable accuracy, the shrill sounds of a fife, she headed the petticoated patrol into the hall, and from there into the white whirl outside, their discordant voices echoing back from behind the dancing snow-wreaths for fully five minutes before they were at last swallowed up in that of the increasing storm.

Meanwhile, by the united exertions of Rose, Mrs. John and Mrs. John's eldest boy—a clever little lad of twelve—the operation of getting a dinner sufficient for so many extra mouths was going ahead. Rose was a good hand at cooking when she was so minded, but her apprehensions were great while conjecturing whether the *Boeuf à la mode en gelée*, which was her masterpiece, and upon which she had relied for Sunday, would prove sufficient, and whether the apple-tarts Mrs. John was turning out could be made to go round. Lōic was inexorably hospitable, and, manlike, could never understand why the impromptu arrival of half a dozen guests need make any difference. Also, as she well knew, he was determined that the table appointments should always be as perfect as their limited resources would permit, and she made several anxious excursions to the dining-room in an attempt to contrive a decorative centre-piece of red apples and oranges, since all the hyacinth and Friesland bulbs which Lōic had planted and tended for that purpose, in a pretty majolica jardinière, had come to grief through her forgetting for two consecutive nights to close the pantry window whereon they lived.

Besides "Tommy Tiddles" there assembled, an hour later, round the board one Boutey, a fat, grandly mustachioed Belgian, who, according to his own declarations,

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

had once been—when, he did not state, nor for how long—the most prosperous horse-dealer in King Leopold's dominions! Just now, as he enthusiastically explained, he was on the point of concluding a huge deal with his native land for the purchase of artillery-horses in America. At his side sat a clean-shaven, bald individual, excessively self-assertive and lavishly provided with the *outrécuidance* and *bagou* of his beloved country—the south of France—and, lastly, a thin, haggard-looking Parisian, and a pompous, dark-bearded man with a grandiloquent way of talking about his “place” in Westchester, where, if one was to believe him, “the best polo ponies in the States, Sir,” were to be found. The “place,” by-the-way, was not his, and he merely mismanaged it for a blind and confiding millionaire who knew less than nothing about either polo or ponies, but since he claimed to be a Norman—which he was not—and darkly hinted at the frightful reverses which had forced his whole family to abandon title and castles and himself to earn his bread by the sweat of his brow, it would have been sheer cruelty not to try and help him bear up against these undeserved misfortunes by treating him always with the utmost kindness and deference. Indeed, so successful did Lōic's efforts in that direction prove that on this particular occasion he unbent to the extent of singing at dessert, for the benefit of the delighted Kikette, a comic song accompanied by a measured tinkle of his knife blade on the rim of his finger-bowl, the refrain:

“ Et Milor était mêlède, très mêlède, bien mêlède !”

as well as the sea-sick gurgles of a “Milor” crossing the Channel under difficulties, being rendered with such intense realism that he literally convulsed the company, all excepting Lōic, who endeavored to conceal his lack

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

of appreciation, since for once in a way he had the opportunity of seeing Rose literally choking with laughter. She had never enjoyed herself better, as she remarked while wiping the tears from her eyes.

However, she shortly afterwards left the gentlemen to their wine—there was plenty of it, never fear—in order to carry the struggling Kikette to bed, and as soon as she was alone with her in the great, gloomy bedroom, immediately above, she instantly relapsed into her usual despondent mood, and began once more to dwell with intense bitterness upon the future which she felt certain would bring her nothing but neglect, injustice, desperate misery, and final ruin!

Kikette, kneeling beside her little blue-and-white bed, was saying her prayers, the old Breton prayers taught her as soon as she could speak, by her father, perhaps more because of dear personal souvenirs of what he and Gäidik had been used to repeat night and morning than from any sense of duty, while through the floor there rose the muffled refrain of another comic song with which "Tommy" was now favoring his host, and the rousing chorus of which was:

"And 'er golden 'air was a'anging down 'er back!"

"Tommy" was inimitable at comic songs.

Probably the words reminded Rose of "Monkey" and her band, for just as Kikette was about to rise from her knees, she put her hand on the child's shoulder, and whispered:

"Here, repeat after me: 'Bless my dear Papa and make him give up the bad women who take him away from Mamma.'" Mechanically the little thing obeyed, but suddenly she stopped, and looking in her fluffy, white night-gown, like some miniature avenging angel, she

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

jumped up, and turning upon her mother a pair of flashing gray eyes, startlingly identical in harshness and contempt with those Rose saw so frequently now burning in Lōic's face, exclaimed, furiously:

"Papa would not let himself be taken away! You mustn't make me say lies like that!" The scorn on her small, pink face was scathing, and Rose collapsed.

"And 'er golden 'air was a'anging down 'er back!"

"Tommy" was blithely singing down-stairs.

"You won't tell Papa, darling," the mother implored, kneeling beside her angry child. "Promise, and I'll give you lots of bonbons!" But Kikette was not so easily to be appeased, and for some time after she had been tucked within her azure blankets, she still kept bouncing indignantly about, glaring wide-eyed at her mother's figure silhouetted against the window, through which she was staring sullenly at the whitened darkness without.

An hour or so later, a startling uproar ascended from below, the angry snarl of voices raised to their highest pitch making every word plainly discernible, and Rose, who had been sitting moodily in the night-lamp-lighted room, jumped up with startled eyes and blanched cheeks and opened the door, murmuring, "My God, they are quarrelling—what can it be!"

The tumult still increased, then there was the sound of a dog's angry growl, and Lōic's masterful tones, saying, "You'd beat my dog, would you—" then the crash of somebody being forcibly separated from his chair.

Kikette had awakened with a start, and was now sitting bolt upright in bed listening.

"Oh, Kikette, they're killing each other down there!" the judicious mother cried, agonized with terror. "Go and call Papa away; I daren't!"

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

Swift as a swooping swallow the child jumped out of bed, her glorious hair ruffled into a shining aureole. "I'm not afraid of them!" she said, contemptuously, and holding up her long night-gown with one chubby hand, she ran out of the room, the sound of her little bare feet paddling briskly down-stairs being immediately followed by the opening of the dining-room door. All this had happened so quickly that Lõic was still holding the would-be Norman Nobleman by the scruff of the neck, while "Tommy" hung desperately to Teuss's collar—the dog was not an easy brute to restrain when once roused. On the floor lay a broken chair, and from an overturned bottle of whiskey a stream of liquid gold bubbled on to the carpet.

"Papa, come here at once!" an imperious baby voice cried from the threshold, the peremptoriness of the order emphasized by the angry stamp of a rosy, dimpled foot brought down with all the force of that muscular, healthy little body.

Lõic let go of the Norman's coat-collar with such suddenness that the drunken carcass rolled heavily backward, and lay supine beside the streaming whiskey, then catching his breath, as if he had himself received a heavy blow, he sprang over the ruins of the chair, snatched Kikette up, and with a stifled sob of despair and shame raced up-stairs holding her tightly in his arms.

Rose, huddled against the bedroom door, made way for them, speechless with fear, her legs trembling so much that she could barely stand, for one look at Lõic's face had been enough to show her what manner of fury she had roused by sending the child down.

"Did you do this?" he said, facing round fiercely, Kikette still clasped close to his breast. He spoke between clinched teeth, and his lips were chalk-white.

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

Rose tried to answer, but her mouth only twitched, and no sound came.

"You deserve," continued the low voice, laden with unspeakable rage and contempt—"you deserve—oh, I don't know what you deserve, you coward!" and, passing her by, he carried Kikette into his own room, slamming the door so violently after him that the glass of one window fell in with a crash, followed by a whirl of dancing snow-flakes, and a blast of wind which extinguished the lamp.

CHAPTER XXIII

Life was host here, at his call
Came the merry spirits all,
Elfins of the middle air
Leagued against the lurker Care:
Led by Youth in dance along
Jest and Laughter, Joy and Song
Held revel here, whereof there calls
No echo from these ruined walls.
Out are the torches, and the still
Chambers, the empty wind doth fill
And the room of airy powers
Ashes, heaped by mocking Hours.

On a skull.—M. M.

ANOTHER weary day had dragged almost to its close, and Rose once more was pacing the drawing-room, feeling all about her the stillness of an impending crisis. It was not snowing now, but the whole country lay motionless and dreary beneath a heavy white mantle, and across the gray sky a troop of crows scientifically wheeled and manœuvred, while far above the summits of the darkly pencilled pines, a single sable bird seemed to be circling upon a sentinel round, and calling out orders to the rest in a peremptory, saw-like voice. Every branch stood motionless under its burden of frozen crystals, and Rose shivered every time she passed before the windows and glanced hatefully at this immobile landscape, which a true lover of nature must have admired in its whitened, silent grandeur. Lœic and Kikette were away with the Legrands, he for the sake of his little

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

maid having accepted an invitation to a sleighing-party, and a twenty-four-hours' stay with some friends at a considerable distance away, which she, Rose, in a fit of perversity, had stubbornly refused to join.

Suddenly the door was violently thrown open, and Mrs. John rushed in, white and excited. "Mum!" she stammered, "the sheriff and four men are coming up the path. John is afther mating thim by the gate, and they say as they are going to sell iverything here over our heads."

Rose walked unsteadily to the nearest chair and sat down heavily. So the blow had fallen at last! What was she to do now? Where could she hide herself?

"We kin lock thim devils out!" Mrs. John continued, volubly, her self-possession reasserting itself. "Sure Teuss wouldn't let any one touch the door, and me and John can shpake to thim from the upper hall-window, and tell thim that the master not being here, we can't let thim in. But what ails ye, Mum? Faix ye mustn't go and faint now; the Lord knows it ain't the time to do that, nor to keep your tongue froze in yer head!"

No answer beyond a look of pale horror.

"Save us and send us!" poor Mrs. John cried, utterly nonplussed, and shaking Rose rhythmically by the shoulder. "You're looking own sister to a corpse, and here they are, too!" as a loud ring echoed through the house. "What d' ye want done, thin?"

Again the bell was pulled wellnigh out of its socket, and Rose closed her eyes tightly and drew in her head between her shoulders like a turtle warding off a blow, at which show of cowardice Mrs. John could not conceal her indignation.

"And is it that ye've no backbone at all—at all!"

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

she scolded. "Faix, thin, I'll go and shpake to thim misself. I know thim well. Haven't I come here a young married woman and reared five fine childer right on this very place? The shame of it, the shame of it! And 'tis yourself as ought to rout thim out, glory be to God!" And straightening her own back with grim determination, she gave up the attempt to rouse her mistress, and departed to "shpake to thim divils," according to her programme.

Meanwhile, Rose, her hands clasped convulsively together, still shivered and quaked in her chair. It was a terribly nasty business all round, and she was, alas, not the woman to bravely face so desperate a situation; but suddenly she looked up with a flash of hope. Teuss, all his great fangs bared, was standing before her protectingly, his hackles on end, a fire of rising rage turning his beautiful, golden eyes into live coals. And twining her cold, trembling fingers into his collar, she at last rose to her feet just as Mrs. John came running back, her face now scarlet with wrath, crying:

"They're commanding every wan about as emparious as Lords; they ordered the horses out, and some of thim are running thim down like the wind to the village. Ye must face the sheriff, Mum; sure he won't ate ye, or he'll be capturing us also, bad cess to him!"

At that moment John himself came in looking unusually serious, and wearing his Sunday coat over his stable clothes.

"The sheriff must shpake wid ye, Mum," he said, very stiffly, "the master not being here!" and, accepting silence for consent, he vanished, while his wife and Rose, between them, held Teuss back from hurling himself after him to the rescue.

Two minutes later a tall, red-whiskered man, with

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

prominent blue eyes and a splendid watch-chain, was ushered into the room.

"Ah," he said, looking sharply at Rose, "Mrs. Curgote?"

Rose bowed awkwardly, and said "yes" in a faint voice.

"I'm here, Ma'am with a writ of execution from Sharp & Cutter's, general purveyors, empowered to seize your husband's goods and chattels. I've already attached a fur overcoat in the hall, and sent the horses and carriages away. Is the house furniture in your name?"

Rose's face became flame-color. She misinterpreted the question, but her interlocutor took a mistaken view of that flush, and, thinking it the result of virtuous indignation, said, in a milder, almost kindly tone:

"Well, it's often done to preserve the wife's interests. Was it bought in your name, Ma'am?"

"What, ze furniture?" she asked, confusedly. "No, no, everything belongs to my 'usband!" And then all of a sudden the hitherto bewildered and terrified woman, encouraged by the deputy-sheriff's unexpected friendliness, raised her head and spoke. "It ees a shame!" she cried, now absolutely shaking with rage. "My 'usband ees a Nobleman, *un Aristocrate*, a Marquis! Do you onderstan'? I am ze Marquise de Kergöat; if you do not believe me look at zis—" pointing at a brooch made from one of Löic's breast-pins, a pretty little enamelled coronet, set with diamonds, which fastened her dingy dressing-gown. "Ze de Kergöats 'ave millions. My sister-in-law ees a Duchess, do you 'ear, scound-r-rele—and you'll be punishe for zis outrage *cette abomination!*" Teuss, as if he wished to protest against this astonishing indiscretion, and preferred to personally interfere, gave a low, threatening growl, and the deputy-sheriff stepped back.

"You hold that dog," he said, angrily, "and don't you

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

try to frighten me with your rigmaroles. I don't care a rap who your sister-in-law is or your husband, either, for the matter of that. He owes money and must pay, that's all I know. Have you the cash to settle? No! Well, then, I must do my duty. I wasn't inclined to be hard on you, but I don't like your tone, my young lady, and I want none of your impudence."

Once more Rose collapsed; her attempt at what she mistook for the hauteur befitting a great lady having proved a failure, she instantly resorted to wheedling and tears. "Oh, Monsieur, I did not mean to insult you; please, please forgive me!" she stammered, beginning to sob bitterly.

Mrs. John, looking on in disgust, turned to the deputy. "She don't know any better, Mr. Hook!" she said, in a vigorous whisper. "The boss is different; it's a pity he ain't here! Tell me and John what's doing and we'll 'tend to it. This sort of work won't do at all, at all, and don't torment her any further, Sir, av ye please, the poor crature."

"Ah, now, that's more like business!" he willingly approved, his anger fading at once before her good sense. "Go and separate all her personal belongings and the child's from the rest; you can put aside the gent's clothing, too."

"What about his fur-coat, thin?" Mrs. John stoutly interrupted.

"That's a luxury; he don't need it," the officer of the law retorted, smartly; "but hold on, I'll go with you and show you what to take and what to leave," and unceremoniously turning his back upon "Madame la Marquise," he followed the grenadier-like figure of Mrs. John up-stairs, Rose, still convulsed with weeping, letting them go without raising a finger to detain them.

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

What was she to do, she thought, desperately? Could she remain in that dismantled house to await Lōic's return? No, she had best join him at once and tell him what had happened. Oh, why had she not disobeyed and written to Gäidik? To be sure Lōic would never have forgiven it, not only as a transgression of his independent principles, but because the affection of these two, strong and jealous as ever, was a sort of sacred ground upon which one trod only at one's imminent peril; but would not even that peril have been preferable to what had just happened? She leaned her elbows on the nearest table and tried hard to think. It was imperative for her to come to some decision—now, at once. She felt that she could not seek advice from the Johns, to whom, moreover, a large amount of wage was due. Could she "sneak" her coat and hat from up-stairs and make good her escape without being noticed?

On tiptoe and holding on for protection to Teuss's collar, she stole into the hall and listened. The voices of the party above were distinctly audible floating down through the open doors of Kikette's little room.

"It's himself as would be cut to the heart to see the darlin's bed go!" Mrs. John was saying; then again, after some less distinct sentence in a man's deep tones, her somewhat piercing notes were raised in protest. "Och, don't take her silver mouse! Poor little spalpeen! We call her 'Mouse,' too, because she's so quick and cliver, an' she has lashin's of mice for toys. Saints alive, he buys her iverythin' she wants; he is a nate an' lovely young man—" Rose stopped to hear no more, but, dragging Teuss after her, crept step by step up the back stairs to her own room, where she hurriedly dressed herself in a warm gown and cloak, and without even thinking of putting a few necessaries in a hand-bag, snatched up

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

her meagre purse and Teuss's leash, and silently slipped from the house by one of the French windows of the empty drawing-room.

From the lower drive a sheriff's officer espied her—he had been watching there for some time—and as she hurried along with her formidable escort he stepped forth and barred the road.

"You can't take that dog away; he is valuable property," he said, holding out his hand for the leash, but Teuss, firmly planted on his four strong, tenacious feet, gave so ominous a growl that the man fell back in dismay.

"Don't touch 'eem, 'e would keel you!" Rose cried, terror-stricken, and, profiting by the man's bewilderment, she flew past him and ran down the long, snow-packed path, weird with the suggestive shadows thrown by its tall, double hedges. Once she ventured to look back over her shoulder, and shuddered as she saw lights moving behind the windows of the grim old house. Surely the search for her had already begun, and again she ran as she had never run in her life before, save once from a woman drowning in the fetid ooze of a great Vendéen marsh.

* * * * *

Six miles from the railway, in a ramshackle farmhouse, which one approached by a dismal "dirt road," deeply rutted with wagon-wheels, Lœic and Kikette and Rose found a refuge in their distress. "Tommy Tiddles" had boarded there one summer "for a song," as he graphically and truthfully put it, for little else had he ever paid, and it was he who, much moved by his friends' misfortunes—for he was really not a bad-hearted lad—had recommended the place to them.

The first impression that one received upon entering

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

the house was due to an overpowering odor of eternally boiling corned-beef and cabbage diluted with the effluvia from the neighboring cow-stables; the second—for the senses were dulled to intervening phenomena—was afforded by a glimpse into a parlor of prim, chill, stiff neatness, furnished in battered, “Early-Victorian” mahogany and horsehair, and more resembling a meeting-house than a habitable room. There was a bare little entrance-hall, papered some decades back in merciless blues and yellows, a frowsy living-room, littered with the belongings of all its daily inmates, and, finally, a nearly perpendicular staircase leading to the upper floor, which was divided into what “Tommy” called the rabbit-hutches—*i. e.*, a dozen tiny, low-ceiled, white-washed rooms, six of which were rented to “city-folks” during the summer months, and the remaining six occupied all the year round by the worthy farmer, his good-natured, corpulent wife, their two sons, and four stalwart daughters.

Outwardly the farmstead was not a thing of beauty, like its namesakes of England and France—which, verdure-bowered and vine-clad, spread their idyllic charm over many picturesque miles. One came upon it suddenly, at the end of the above-mentioned, tortuous, deep-rutted road, in all its unadorned nakedness; first, a great, dingy, yellow barn, then a dilapidated cowshed, with a gigantic pile of all manner of refuse—the delight of the chickens and ducks—at its entrance, and, finally, huddling into the other buildings as if thoroughly ashamed of its ugliness, the dwelling itself, a square frame-house, painted in the same butter-tint as the barn, and, like it, long since streaked with the lamentable black finger-marks of rain and storm.

The farmer was a tall, spare man, with a hatchet face

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

and an excellent heart, which he took the greatest pains to conceal beneath unpleasantly boorish manners. His wife was short and stout, and of an equally kindly temper, and the boys and girls were simple-minded, good-natured young people who soon adored Kikette, prostrated themselves before Loïc, and did their best to console and cheer the drooping Rose, who, since her eventful flight from Cinnamon Hill, spent her life in tears and lamentations.

The wreck of Loïc's fortunes was now complete; nothing remained to him from all that had been his save his clothes, a boxful of papers and photographs, Gaidik's picture and miniature—saved as by a miracle through Tommy's energetic agency—and, lastly, his beloved Teuss. Kikette and Rose's clothes had been rescued, too, but that was all; and, without money, without hope, without help from any source, he set himself once more to the bitter task of trying to find a place at some of New York's riding-schools, in order to earn wherewithal to pay for their board at Caulfield's Farm.

Wearily, day after day, he rose at five, and, when unable to get a lift on one of the milk-wagons going to the station with their noisily rattling cans, would tramp it along the snow-covered roads. When he started, the short winter day had not begun to break, and the heavy, sluggish darkness hung over the land, making walking a difficult matter. The weather was still very cold, and he sorely missed his fur coat, which he had left at home to be seized by the sheriff, having donned that day a short, wolf-hide jacket, preferable for sleighing purposes, and which, alas, was now in pawn.

It was now that he began to realize the loss of a certain physical elasticity, a certain unwearied freshness of strength that he had always possessed. Troubles and

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

disappointments had begun to tell even upon his iron constitution, additionally undermined by constant imprudences, over-fatigue, an absolute disregard for any sort of regularity in eating his meals, and frequent doses of stimulants taken when he had no time and often no money to go to a restaurant, or when he thought it necessary to propitiate possible employers by treating them frequently and generously—for generous he always was to the point of recklessness, whatever the state of his own finances might be. He reasoned with himself about his weaknesses and deficiencies during these long tramps through drowsy country lanes and along the crowded streets of the huge, selfish city, reasoned with himself until his gnawing anxieties became dulled by fatigue, and it was only by a violent effort that he would pull himself together and straighten his shoulders to enter with his old, proud, devil-may-care bearing the various establishments where he still hoped against hope to obtain remunerative work.

One cold, bitter night, when the densely falling snow was whirled in a wild waltz by a headlong wind and piled in deep drifts on streets and housetops, Lōic, footsore and deadly weary, was trudging down Eighth Avenue along the park wall. He had been detained far beyond his usual time by the owner of a small horse-dealing establishment in Harlem, who seemed inclined to accept his services, and, having thus lost all chance of catching the last train out to Caulfield's Farm, was now on his way to seek a night's lodging at some cheap hotel downtown. With his shoulders hunched and his chin upon his breast, he plodded obstinately against the blinding gusts upon the long, weary journey necessitated by his lack of car-fare, his mind burdened with gloomy thoughts. He was feeling particularly unequal to the struggle of

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

life, unusually useless and inapt, hot with rage at circumstances, and with contempt of himself because he had but one talent to offer the world in exchange for a living, and that, one which the world seemed to hold in slight esteem.

Stopping to take breath and to straighten his aching neck as he reached Fifty-ninth Street, he suddenly became aware that a new roar was overtopping that of the storm, sweeping across the deserted streets with an even fiercer blast than that of the wind, and, wiping the moisture from his eyes, he saw above the housetops a red glow burning through the snow-shroud in the direction of Fifth Avenue. At once his heart gave a leap, and, forgetting his fatigue, he started across town at a run, in obedience to an impulse that was at first instinctive, but gradually formulated itself as he dashed on through the white, whirling veil.

It was a big hotel which was on fire, one where, years before, during his first trip to America, he had spent some pleasurable and amusing weeks. From the roof thick volumes of black smoke were belching forth, lined with vivid crimson by the roaring flames below, while at the wide-open windows the half-clad forms of frenzied men and women could plainly be discerned, yelling wide-mouthed for assistance. The sidewalks were thronged with weeping, shrieking women, wearing, for the most part, little besides their night-gowns, and holding convulsively to their breasts the few valuables that they had snatched up when aroused from their first slumbers by the terrifying cry of "Fire!" while others were throwing satchels and even valises and light trunks into the street, thus grievously endangering the lives of the firemen heroically swarming towards the burning-hot walls, axe and rope in hand. Trucks and engines were thundering

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

up from all directions, for the dreaded "Third Alarm" had some time since been sounded; but even the splendid New York Fire Department was for once wellnigh powerless in the face of that hurricane of smoke and flames.

Fully a dozen engines were at work now, puffing and pumping imperturbably, and adding their ear-piercing whistles to the appalling hubbub, while the red cinders from their furnaces sizzled and went out with a succession of tiny breaths of expiring steam in the black slush of fast-melting snow-drifts.

A fierce joy ran through Lōic's veins like a generous wine, and the thought that had been shaping itself in his mind sprang to his lips: "Here, at least, is something I can do!"

Without an instant's hesitation he made use of his powerful shoulders to force a way through the surging crowd, and, reaching the fire lines, found himself face to face with an Inspector of Police whom he happened to know—he knew by now many people of many different callings, did Lōic.

"May I lend a hand?" he asked, shortly, nodding towards the fiercely lighted windows crowded with struggling and shrieking humanity.

"That you, Mr. Curgote?" the officer replied, without showing the least astonishment at the request. "Pass if you feel like it; there are women and children being roasted and trampled in there who'll be glad enough to be rescued," and, without another word, he rushed away to attend to his own business.

A few seconds later Lōic was groping his way along corridors so dense with black vapor that he could scarcely breathe, and which seemed to lead to the very fires of hell. But what were to him tottering staircases, elevator shafts transformed into volcano-throats, and

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

scorching floors that quivered and buckled like lava-crusts above the roaring furnace below, since at last he had his opportunity to do something worthy of him, and since he felt himself superbly fit to accomplish it? He afterwards remembered these things disconnectedly, as one recalls fragments of a nightmare together with others—ghastly figures of shrieking women ablaze from head to foot, and heaps of half-naked humanity piled up on chaotic landings—wondering how he had managed to persevere as long as he had done in that terrible, self-imposed task, how he had escaped uninjured during journey after journey through the choking reek, the scorch of the flames, with blinded eyes and gasping lungs bearing so many unconscious or madly writhing forms to the icy outer air and safety.

It was a very different Lôic who, just as the new day was breaking, picked his way among the innumerable lengths of hose just being withdrawn from the collapsing walls, and which writhed about him like knots of tangled snakes. His head was erect, his shoulders squared, and, in spite of crushing fatigue, of aching muscles, of a pair of frozen ears, and of hands bruised and bleeding, he looked so extraordinarily happy that those around him stared open-mouthed at this strange figure, clad in burned and torn clothes, that gazed up at the murky, snow-filled dawn with so strange an expression of thankfulness. They took him for one of the rescued. How few among them could have understood why this desperate labor and imminent peril should have gained for him a reserve of strength and hope that endured for many a weary day to come!

* * * * *

In the spring Lôic had at last one little stroke of luck. He was getting thoroughly desperate, when, through the

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

agency of a friend, he was brought into contact with a rather superior sort of horse-dealer and trainer who owned just such another establishment as he himself had so greatly hoped to make of Cinnamon Hill, and who, after a couple of interviews, completely won by Lõic's straightforwardness and modesty, offered him the position of stable-master and headman. The salary was only twenty dollars a week, but there was a little house to be had gratis on the place—a tiny cottage, wreathed in roses, where Kikette could again play at will on her own domain; so Lõic jumped at the chance, and early in May the little family took possession of it with hearts full of gratitude.

Bob Mildway, the owner of "Rose-Dell" and Lõic's "boss," though he himself rode but indifferently, knew a good thing when he saw it, and since he never allowed any one to get to the blind side of him in a bargain, was doing well in his business. He picked up good-looking cattle at cheap rates, had them put in hard condition and well broken, and ultimately sold them as made hunters and park-hacks for six or eight times the amount they had cost him. Indeed, he would long since have been a rich man had it not been for the difficulty he had hitherto found in discovering a really honest and trustworthy trainer and breaker, and also for the fact that, much against his wife's advice, he dabbled on the turf and the stock-exchange, and was often badly hit. He was a tall, silent man, with a solemn face and a long, melancholy nose; but Mrs. Mildway, a petite, vivacious creature, with beautiful dark hair and eyes, always exquisitely dressed, clever, energetic, and an excellent manager, was the veritable soul of the place. She shrugged her shapely shoulders when her husband talked about bad times, curtailed income, and hampered business conditions, and, indeed, thanks to her constant attention, there

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

was no sign of shabbiness or stint about her house and gardens. She kept an excellent cook, worked early and late to assist her lord, and thus brought about such satisfactory results that Lōic often repressed a sigh of envy as he remembered the slipshod, irresponsible fashion in which Rose had performed similar duties.

Mrs. Mildway did not take a fancy to Rose, but she at once fell a victim to Kikette's beauty and masterful little ways, and sincerely pitied and admired Lōic. She, with her quick wit and experience, read the situation at a glance, and when she saw with what will her husband's new trainer set to work, esteem soon was joined to liking where he was concerned.

Lōic, indeed, labored like a slave. From the very first all the horses passed through his hands; he had a wonderful way with them, as she soon perceived, and he was out on the training-ground from daylight to dark, just coming in for his meals like the grooms, and starting off again the minute he had swallowed the last mouthful. At night he was tired enough to drop, and his hands were quite raw from the constant handling of reins, stirrup-leathers, and saddles; but, in spite of it all, the relief caused by the possession of a "steady job," and the regular hours he was forced to keep, did him good. Indeed, a month of this new life restored his health and appetite and brought back hope to his heart.

His presence as Bob Mildway's headman astounded this worthy gentleman's distinguished patrons, for his appearance was certainly not that of a salaried employé, and they were lavish of their praise and outspoken admiration. That "the Squire," as Mildway was familiarly called, was overjoyed at this success would be saying too much, and, although Lōic held himself severely aloof from the "social" side of the establishment, and fulfilled his

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

duties more than conscientiously, with no thrusting forward of his brilliant talents, and no flurry whatsoever, displaying on the contrary great judgment and determination in keeping officially as much as possible in the background, yet he felt from the first that his chief was jealous of him and grudged him his superior abilities. Vainly did poor L^oic try to show himself yet more retiring; the lady patronesses of the Rose-Dell training establishment would not hear of his remaining absent from the paper-chases organized by "the Squire," and they spoke to him of his stable-master in terms of such enthusiasm that, had they sworn to lose him his place, they could not have gone more effectually about it.

Meanwhile, Rose, peering and watching through the latticed windows of her tiny home, grew bitter as gall, and vowed vengeance on the whole world of women.

"What's this flower?" she asked, peremptorily, one evening as he entered the little kitchen where she was preparing a late supper. "Give it here!" and she snatched it from his button-hole, her eyes alight with anger.

"Well, upon my word!" L^oic gasped, utterly thunder-struck by her extraordinary violence, but for once disregarding all prudence, she flung the dainty yellow rosebud across the room, narrowly missing some slender-stemmed glasses on the table, and in tones hoarse with rage, cried:

"I'll poison myself if you continue to dare me like that; yes, and my death will lie at your door!" Her face was crimson, even her neck flamed; but L^oic, who remembered an occasion, years ago, when he had been nastily taken in by a pretence on her part to swallow a dose of laudanum, with which she had merely rinsed her mouth and stained her dress, afterwards twisting and twirling convulsively on the floor, shrugged his

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

shoulders and began to unstrap his spurs without paying the slightest attention to this threat. He was, fortunately, in a very good temper, having just sold three horses at a rattling good price, and received for once a cordial "Thank you. You are doing splendidly," from the delighted "Squire," else Rose would certainly not have fared quite so well. Encouraged by his silence, she continued, banging the dishes and plates violently about in the narrow little sink: "You treat me abominably; d' you think that I am always to be a mere drudge, good enough only to cook your meals and bring up your brat while you dance attendance on a lot of beastly, shameless women?"

"That's enough!" L^oic said, sternly. "Are you mad? And don't yell like that, you will wake up Kikettel!"

"Kikette, always Kikette! You think of nothing but her and your precious sister! Am I nobody? I don't count in your eyes, I see, excepting as a butt for your tempers and your bad compliments—a fine life I'm leading here—" She was about to descend again into the arena of common invective, but the sight of L^oic's darkening brow made her think better of it, and, collapsing instead into the nearest chair, she burst into a tempest of those unlovely tears and gurgling sobs of which she had the secret, and which, somehow, disfigured her for hours after the storm had passed.

Often had L^oic gently and patiently reasoned with her on such occasions, but these had been too frequent lately to create much impression upon him now, and, utterly disgusted, he left her to her moanings and sniffings, closing the door after him. Truly, everything seemed to conspire against the possibility of his ever redeeming the sorrowful past! What with the hard work he was doing, the influence of the sporting crowd surrounding him—a

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

hard-drinking, fast-living one, indeed—and the miseries of his life with Rose, he had reached the top of a slope down which it is difficult not to slide swiftly. An overwrought body and an overstrained heart are bad helpers in such a situation, and a bitter curse was on his lips as he turned into his own room adjoining that where Kikette lay asleep in her little white cot.

The moon, sailing in a cloudless, sapphire sky, was beginning to touch with silver the nodding roses around the open casement; and, as he paused at the communicating door, a long, shining ray stole in and crept along the trailing folds of the blankets with which the child was covered. Rose's sobs, persistent, wilfully long-drawn, and stubborn, fell exasperatingly on Lōic's ear; they were really too loud and came with too much emphasis to be considered a spontaneous expression of true grief; and, enervated beyond measure, he crossed over to the tiny dining-room and quickly poured himself out a glass of brandy, which he dashed down at one gulp. The spirits ran through his veins, diffusing instantly a grateful feeling of slight exhilaration, and so satisfied was he with its effects that, after a second's hesitation, he took a second dose; then, going back to his room, he rinsed his mouth with violet water, and, gently pushing Kikette's door wide open, tiptoed to the side of her tiny bed.

The moon-ray had crept farther now to shed its white caress upon Kikette, who, with her chubby hands clasped beneath one rounded cheek, breathed softly through parted lips, her extraordinary childish beauty etherealized and intensified tenfold by the flood of pure, passionless light aureoling it.

Slowly Lōic bent over her, nearer and nearer, until he knelt on one knee upon the drooping blankets. A great hatred of himself was welling up in his heart, and the

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

moon-ray which so fitly enshrined the loveliness of the child made his own handsome face look suddenly very haggard and worn. His mind at that moment was a chaos of conflicting emotions, the *Leitmotif* of which was intolerable remorse—remorse for having yielded to Rose's entreaties at La-Roche-Sur-Yon, remorse for not having devised a way to tear his little one from her grasp and give her to Gäidik, who would have brought her up in the *milieu* to which she belonged, remorse also that he should have failed to maintain his little establishment at Cinnamon-Hill, and last, if not least, remorse and shame, too, for having gulped down that double drink before coming to kiss his little maid good-night.

Of late he had been so much absorbed in his work that he had hardly had any time to give her, and somehow or other a great wave of disgust now rose in him at the thought of the low and humiliating aspects of his present life and the many degrading temptations it brought with it. His hopes of remaking a fortune had gradually given way to an overmastering desire of merely finding means to leave America and return "home"—not to Kergoat, of course, but to some humble corner of Brittany, where in a lonely cottage he could live in peace with Kikette, far, far away from all the disappointments and struggles which were so hard to bear.

Kneeling there, close to that little bed, this desire all at once took the form of a resolve. What allurements that peaceful picture possessed! Yes, he would try now to spend next to nothing, he would work day and night, would bend his whole mind to making some money on the sales which brought him each a little commission, and when he had gathered together the needful amount—it wouldn't take so very long, after all—he would go back to dear old Brittany and lead the life that in sober earnest

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

he, at the moment, entirely believed himself to prefer. A tiny *chaumière* on the wildest and least-visited coast of his own land, where life would cost next to nothing, was all he demanded. There, with his little Kikette, he would pass slow, charming, uneventful days, earning a small but steady income by buying and selling those sturdy little horses that are the staple of the Breton markets. In a year—why not—perhaps less, if things went passably well—he would have made enough to enable him to put his plan into execution, and in this plan he saw no flaw. To Rose he gave but a passing thought; no doubt she would be delighted, since he would then be far removed from all that now so greatly aroused her jealousy, and if she was not pleased—well, what did it matter, since Gäidik would certainly understand and approve? She had no idea of all he had gone through, for his letters to her had always shown the better side of things, and, when there was none whatsoever to show, he had not scrupled to be cheerfully mendacious; but then he would at last make a clean breast of the dingy, dismal past, and she, his darling sister, would help him retrieve and forget it. And who knew but his *Conseil de Famille* might then relent and grant him a modest yearly sum to add to his resources, or perhaps even restore his full revenues to him.

These thoughts passed through his brain in a soothing glow of hopeful anticipation, and gently, very gently, he bent and kissed Kikette's parted lips, lingering with his head pressed close to hers on the soft pillow for a few delicious minutes. Then, with infinite precaution, he straightened himself, and, after one long, last, loving look, noiselessly left the room by the open window, for he could not afford to have all his good resolutions put to flight by meeting Rose just then.

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

The moonlight glided from Kikette's window and crept calmly on, bathing in its cool radiance first Lõic's bedroom, then the dining-room, where the brandy-bottle sat like an ugly gnome on the centre-table, its gaudy, three-starred label showing clearly against its deep golden flanks, then slowly swept on to the vine-garlanded stoop, where Rose, ever since she had heard the retreating, hurried steps of Lõic, was nervously pacing up and down. Her whole being was trembling with anger and mad jealousy, for she imagined that he had avoided her to run to some gallant rendezvous, perhaps to join the giver of that obnoxious flower now lying crushed on the kitchen floor, and in her heart an unquenchable thirst for revenge grew and grew.

"Is your husband in?" The voice was Bob Mildway's, and it made her start with fear by its sudden hint of opportunity.

She merely shook her head in eloquent denial, and turned her swollen, tear-stained face full upon the astonished "Squire."

"Is there anything amiss?" he asked, kindly, leaning both arms familiarly upon the balustrade and removing his cigar from his mouth. She made no reply, but allowed her tears to flow again unrestrained—she had a talent that way which often stood her in good stead—and, meekly folding her hands around her wet handkerchief, stood there in her plain gown and disordered hair, the very picture of a broken-hearted, neglected, humble wife.

"Tell me," the "Squire" persisted—"I'm old enough to be your father. Tell me, is it your husband who's been making you cry?" The idea of Lõic being brutal to a woman seemed ludicrous even to him, but still her distress was so evident that he could not but rush to the

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

conclusion—against his better sense—that his model stable-master must be at fault in this instance.

“No, no!” she sobbingly and weakly protested, “’e is ze best of ’usbands.” (The “Squire” felt that she was not speaking with conviction.) “’E-e iz good when—when ’e iz not drinking,” she moaned. “But zat brandy—oh! oh! oh! zat brandy makes him mad!”

Like all hard-drinking men, the good “Squire” had a horror of drunkards, and never suffered his employés to indulge in the use of strong waters. “Dangerous that, for men who have to deal with unbroken horses,” he would say, with a sage wag of his melancholy nose. “I always allow one day a month for a thorough good spree, but no more!” To be sure, it had never occurred to him to offer such a vent to his new “gentleman stable-master,” but as he listened to the “poor young wife’s” appalling revelations his brow clouded. Lōic was in charge of his whole establishment, and had practically limitless powers. Could he, Bob Mildway, trust a man who lost in drink his self-control to the point of maltreating a wretched little woman no bigger than a riding-switch? Of course, he knew that Lōic took a nip now and then; indeed, they had often taken a few glasses together in the “office,” but that he ever drank to excess was a surprise to him, and not a pleasant one.

“I am concerned to hear this,” he said, replacing his cigar between his lips, and in his perturbation puffing a cloud of smoke straight into her face. “I had no idea he was that kind of a man, although we horsey people always tittle a bit, of course, but he seemed a superior sort of chap, and very popular with my lady patrons—” Tact was not included among the excellent “Squire’s” numerous qualities, and he did not even notice how Rose winced at that ill-inspired outburst of praise. “A very

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

good rider, light hand, perfect judgment—it's a pity, a very great pity," he continued. "But do you really mean to tell me that he ever gets what one might call drunk? Cannot you stop him, Mrs. Kergoat? I am sure you must have influence, a nice, wheedling little thing like you!"

"Oh, Meester Mildway! If only I could stop 'im, but I 'av not ze power, you see—" And she hesitated and looked piteously down at the wet handkerchief she was kneading with restless fingers. "I am not clevere, not amusing, nor beautiful like zoze ozer weemen 'e admires; 'e is tired of me long ago." And, glancing over at him with brimming eyes, she added, under her breath: "Zey also are too strong for me."

The "Squire's" already highly rubicund complexion turned purple with indignation, and he uttered a tall oath. "Women, too, eh?" he exclaimed, with sanctimonious horror. "Those Frenchmen are all alike—a wretched lot where petticoats are concerned! Well, my poor child, I'm awfully sorry for you; immorality is a thing I never could understand; but cheer up, you mustn't take on so; remember that you have your pretty little girl to think of." And, without heeding the "Ah, yes, poor little zing!" wrung from Rose by the mere mention of Lōic's over-petted and adored little daughter, he lifted his cap a quarter of an inch above his head and strode away, in a state of righteous wrath, along a flower-bordered path where five minutes later he met Lōic himself striding home from his moonlight ramble, teeming with good resolves and happy plans, and humming softly, *sotto voce* :

"When all the world is old, lad,
And all the trees are brown,
And all the sport is stale, lad,
And all the wheels run down,

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

Creep home, and take your place there,
The spent and maimed among;
God grant you find one face there
You loved when all was young!"

in no self-pitying spirit, but thinking of the one dear face that he knew would welcome him as tenderly as ever.

"That you, Kergoat?" asked Bob, whose face was still the color of old England's roast-beef. "Could you spare me two minutes in the office? I'd like to speak to you about the little bay mare. How was she to-day?"

"Went very well, Sir," Lōic said, turning instantly to accompany his chief to the yard, "a trifle tender on her near fore when landing after a jump, but—" And here followed a few minutes of "shop-talk" which brought them to their destination, where they sat down on each side of the office centre-table.

The "Squire," after turning up the gas, pushed a cigar-box towards his stable-master and a silence ensued, which Bob spent in rekindling his waning anger—a rather arduous feat before the frank, honest, and eager expression of his young employé's handsome face. That, a drunkard and wife-beater? Impossible! But, still, he was a cursed Aristocrat, a foreigner, and, urged on by his secret jealousy, Mildway was disposed to judge him harshly; so, after making quite a business of lighting a cigar, spluttering and puffing enormously over this simple process, he said at last, with a pomposity that he mistook for ease:

"I've just had a little chat with your wife, Kergoat, and, to be quite frank with you, I don't think that you are treating her as you ought."

Here he stopped, for Lōic was looking at him in a way calculated to inspire caution in a far braver man.

"You may say it's no business of mine," he hurriedly went on, energetically drawing courage from the singu-

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

larly refractory weed between his teeth; "but I'm a man of experience, and, let me tell you, there was despair in her face just now."

There was another silence, the dead silence that precedes a storm. L^oic's eyes were fixed now on the floor, and he was biting his under lip hard to prevent words from escaping him which might cost him his place.

"Are you aware that that poor little woman is terribly unhappy?" continued the foolish man opposite him, somewhat reassured by the lack of a response, and puffing huge clouds of smoke towards the ceiling.

"Has she been invoking your protection?" L^oic asked, holding desperately onto the last shreds of a patience which alone stood between him and utter ruin.

"No, certainly not; but you are in my employ, and I feel in a measure responsible for the welfare of those living on my estate," was the magnificent reply.

"Oh, pray don't let that weigh upon your mind; my wife's welfare is in no way endangered, and, moreover, I prefer to have sole control over my family affairs. Outside of my duties in the stable, I think that you need exercise no supervision over me." The retort was delivered in a tone which staggered the pompous "Bob," for the courteous and deferential employ^e had suddenly disappeared, to make room for a haughty *Grand Seigneur* setting neatly back into his place a meddlesome inferior. Too late Mildway saw the consequences of his folly, too late he thought of the invaluable aid this young man was to him, and, with a bitter pang, he seemed to hear his own wife's reproaches when she discovered all this. It was, therefore, in a vastly different manner that he hastened to exclaim:

"You are wrong to take amiss what I've said, Kerg^oat. My intentions are of the best, and, personally, I

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

entertain a great esteem for you, but I found your wife crying fit to break her heart, and I gathered from what she told me—well, to put it mildly, that you—well, neglect—and—and are rough to her when—”

So thoroughly had he gotten himself entangled that Lōic, unable to endure much more, interrupted his stammerings with a peremptory:

“When what?”

“When you’re drunk,” blurted the floundering and desperate “Squire.”

“What the hell do you mean by that?” Lōic said, rising so abruptly that his chair fell over with a crash upon the floor. Roused to a white heat, that young Celt was not an agreeable antagonist, and his alarmed chief recoiled with a scared look from the livid face and blazing eyes confronting him, so convinced that this was a raging, dangerous human animal, perfectly capable not only of striking a woman but of committing any other violent and criminal deed that a very little more would have made him take to his heels.

For a couple of seconds they stared at each other; then, with the characteristic squaring of his broad shoulders, Lōic reconquered himself—perhaps the craven terror in the “Squire’s” eyes did the trick—and said, with surprising quietness:

“You will please accept my resignation. I leave here to-morrow morning.” And, turning on his heel, he passed out of the “office,” and, thanks to a woman’s idiotic treachery and a fool’s gullibility, out of the life of the man for whom he was in the way to earn a fortune.

“I leave here to-morrow morning.” The words seemed to deafen him as he crunched the gravel of a side-path beneath his heels. Slowly, almost gropingly, he reached a grassy bank beneath the one linden-tree he had ever

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

seen in America, sat wearily down, and began to wonder idly and without much interest what he felt, but even this just now was beyond him, and, save for the fact that he was conscious of a slight qualm of nausea, he merely realized that his brain, always so perfectly clear and capable of receiving accurate impressions, was an utter blank. There was a whisper of leaves faintly stirred by the night breeze round him, and slender threads of broken moon-rays flickered through the linden blossoms, the exquisite fragrance of which carried him back—dully and but half-consciously—to the great avenue at Kergöat, where he and Gäidik used to gather huge basketfuls of them for their mother's bath-sachets.

He sat perfectly quiet for a length of time which he would have been totally unable to determine, watching the countless brilliant little lights of the fire-flies as they sprinkled up from the sward like the tiny bubbles in soda-water, and he would perchance have remained much longer in this curious numbed and almost trancelike tranquillity had he not suddenly been partially roused from it by the sound of Mrs. Mildway's voice coming from somewhere behind the trees concealing him. He had always remarked the harmonious depth of her tones, and quite unconsciously, at first, he took pleasure in listening to them.

"You cannot do that, Bob," she was saying. "You cannot let him go. Run after him and apologize; you were entirely in the wrong, and he is invaluable to us."

"I'll be damned if I do, Maria," came in answer the surly growl of an angry man. "You are like the rest of them, dead in love with his handsome face and grand manners; but I'm sick of 'em both. You should have seen him just now; why, there was murder in his eyes!"

Löic would have liked to rise and walk away, but he

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

found himself actually unable to make up his mind to the effort it entailed, his muscles did not answer to the impulse, and again he wondered apathetically why. His cap was still in his hand, and he began to fan himself mechanically with it, although the night air was deliciously cool and refreshing. After a few seconds he stopped, and, pulling a long grass-blade from a tuft beside him, he gently bit it; then, aware that he was doing a childish thing, he let it drop on his lap and resumed his idle staring at the fire-flies and at the threads of silver light with which the hardly perceptible wind was spinning so delicate and brilliant a web throughout the nest of perfumed shadow made by the drooping branches of the linden.

Again Mrs. Mildway was speaking:

"You are a fool, Bob. You have been jealous of him all along, and now you are taking advantage of a stupid quarrel to get rid of the only perfect assistant you ever had. What does it matter to you how he treats his wife, and how do you know that what she told you was true? She is a nasty little beast, if you want my candid opinion, and I wonder how he can put up with her."

"There you are!" snarled the "Squire." "You, being a woman, of course take his part and revile her. I can't intrust my horses and my interests to a drunkard and a profligate, anyway; that you must see, at any rate!"

"Pshaw! He does not drink a bit more than you do yourself, and at least 'he' is a gentleman!" The voice was no longer quite so harmonious; there was a ring of cold contempt in it, and the husband caught its sting.

"I'm surprised at you, Maria," he remonstrated. "It's high time that he should be off, if that's your way of thinking—the damned, beggarly, out-at-elbows Aristocrat!"

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

Löic, fully awake at last, jumped up, and, without caring a jot whether he was heard or not, crashed through the linden boughs and started at a rapid stride down the road, aching from head to foot with the desire to administer to his ex-chief the well-merited thrashing from which his little wife's presence alone saved him; and as he went he thought not of to-morrow and the houselessness of to-morrow, but of the exquisite relief it would have been to punch "Bob's" melancholy nose out of all human semblance.

CHAPTER XXIV

Dead calm! dead calm! nor a breeze that blows
And level the listless ocean-lawn,
Save a seldom ripple whence no one knows
That lappeth, and lo—is gone!
The pale morn, fainting and all foredone,
Cowers at the feet of the coming sun,
And the blank day, fiery-fierce and bright,
Shudders at last into choking night.
Oh, sing of a sneering Thought, that saith
The balance droopeth from Life to Death!
And groan with the cordage dewed in balm
From the sweltering pine,
Dead calm!

M. M.

“THIS will do very well,” Lōic said, quietly, pausing on the threshold of the diminutive “apartment” he had just visited. With a little nod and a suppressed sigh, he turned towards the janitress—a thin, middle-aged Irishwoman, with a wisp of gray hair fastened on the crown of her head and an expression of devouring curiosity pervading her whole eager person—and, taking from his pocket an exquisite gold-mounted card-case—which made the worthy woman open her crafty little eyes to their widest—paid one month’s rent in advance.

Twenty-one dollars—this was astonishingly cheap for New York, he thought, especially since the street was broad and clean, the house one of a long row of green-shuttered frame buildings overlooking the fresh and well-kept lawns of a pretty cemetery, that formed a grateful interval between the tall brick tenements and cheap,

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

dingy shops of the neighboring Avenue. Immediately adjoining, a little Catholic church, covered with a thick mantle of ampelopsis, which clothed it from high gabled roof to granite basement in a constantly rustling armor of overlapping pointed leaves, added to the rural aspect of the place—a priceless virtue in Lõic's nature-loving eyes. To be sure, the rooms—there were two of them, besides a kitchen no bigger than a pocket-handkerchief, and a bath—were neither very modern nor even very convenient, but, as he casually remarked to himself, "Beggars cannot be choosers"—and he was very nearly beggared now! Last of all, there was an unusually large, neglected backyard, which he had stipulated could be used as a run for Teuss.

"And the furniture, Sir?" the janitress said, tentatively, breaking upon his meditations.

"Oh, that's all right!" he replied, hurriedly. "It will be sent in to-morrow." And with four crisp twenty-dollar bills—all he possessed in the world—still snugly tucked away in that incongruous, gold-mounted case, he took leave of the janitress and bent his steps towards a furniture-shop, where, within the hour, he contracted for just enough beds, chairs, tables, and other absolute necessities—on the instalment plan—to make immediate occupation of the new quarters possible.

In the midst of the hurrying crowds he felt singularly alone that afternoon; the passing faces, the roar of traffic, the hustling and jostling around him, in no way disturbed his thoughts, which, passing and repassing, crossing and recrossing, went on upon their inexorable course wholly unaffected by outward things:

"Quand jémiettais mon pain à l'oiseau du rivage
L'onde semblait me dire Espère! aux mauvais jours.
Dieu te rendra ton pain! Dieu me le doit toujours!"

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

These lines of the friendless and starving Moreau recurred to him with fatiguing persistency. He, too, had in days gone by cast his bread upon many waters, giving to all who demanded—to many who did not—with royal generosity, but he still remained unpaid, unrewarded, and he smiled his cynical little smile as he pondered on his own present needs.

His lesson was wellnigh learned by now. He was realizing, at last, how criminally he had thrown away his life, neglected his unique opportunities, and sacrificed all that was worth having—all save Kikette. It was almost too late now to reconquer and redeem the past, and his course of duty was marked before him with grim distinctness. Therefore he contemptuously set aside every bitter thought as marking an unmanly tendency to complain of the natural results of his own actions, and devoted himself to keeping alive within his heart a tiny flame of hope intermittently pulsating, now dim, now bright, according to the moment, the centre of which was Gäidik. Gäidik's courage, her fixity of purpose, her unyielding tenacity, her love for and pride in him, were the ideas upon which he bent his mind, to the end that the long lane perchance might have a turning.

Kikette and Rose, once installed in the small rooms overlooking the pretty, parklike cemetery, he set forth anew in search of employment. It was weary, weary work, this going from door to door, dressed in immaculately brushed clothes, which were beginning to show slight, but to him exasperating, signs of wear; this answering advertisements almost invariably worthless; this constant humbling of his pride to low, horsey people, whom in days gone by he would not have deemed worthy of a position in his own stables, but who to-day looked him up and down as though he were some mere ques-

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

tionable piece of merchandise. A few weeks of it brought Loïc wellnigh to the limits of both courage and endurance. To come home every night completely fagged, to rise each morning with exceptional energies rearoused to their keenest for another day of profitless tramping and insufficient food—eked out as before by spirits—ends by wearing both body and mind, and, although this obstinate fighter's face was as unemotional and as handsome as ever, it speedily lost all its brightness, the eyes became deeply sunken, and dark streaks showed beneath them.

Rage at his helplessness often came nigh to choking him after these long, dreary, disappointing quests, and his returns to his dingy, barely furnished, ill-kept home and his meagre supper—served in a slip-shod fashion by a soured, imbittered woman on the oil-clothed corner of a kitchen table—were liable to be somewhat stormy.

He had never forgiven Rose the teachery which had caused him to resign his place as "Squire Bob's" stablemaster, nor was it likely that he would ever do so, for to him there was something peculiarly ignoble in that shortsighted and characteristically stupid bit of revenge, and, although he never alluded now to the matter, she could not think, without trembling all over, of the scene which had taken place between them on that eventful night. For the first time she had then seen to what height the Kergôat temper could really rise, and a coldness that increased with time had stood between them ever since.

• She cringed and lied and prevaricated continually now, and he despised her not only for this, but for the lack of honest impulse which had prevented her from even asking his pardon and from relying upon the forbearance and generosity which hitherto had never once failed her.

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

From the very beginning she had done little else than shatter his illusions one after the other—at first, perhaps carelessly and because it lay in her nature to do so, but for a long time past deliberately—and she was now reaping the fruits of her sowing. Gäidik and Kikette—Lôic's two only remaining treasures—were the objects of her peculiar jealousy. In her lax way she certainly loved her little daughter, yet that ever-increasing resemblance to Lôic's detested sister made her act, at times, towards the child with extreme harshness and injustice—this, of course, happening only when Lôic was out of the way.

He, poor fellow, still wrote letters full of hope and cheery anticipation to Gäidik, but these documents, never conspicuously coherent, were beginning to arouse in their recipient fears that Fate was not really dealing as leniently with her Frérot as she prayed daily that it might; and, although she never for a moment suspected the fearful odds besetting him on all sides, yet she fell into the habit of sending "to Kikette"—as she delicately put it—substantial checks, which, had she but known it, alone saved the little family on more than one occasion from utter destitution. With such a pitiful housekeeper as Rose, however, debts grew daily in bulk. The poor little rent became overdue, the tradespeople who furnished the scanty daily provender clamored for their humiliatingly infinitesimal bills, and Lôic, almost desperate, took yet another step downward and resolved to apply for a place as driver in a livery-stable.

One day, therefore, having carefully perused the advertisement columns of the newspapers, he set forth, heavy indeed at heart, to offer his services in that capacity to the owner of a prosperous Brooklyn establishment. It was a glorious autumn day, mellow and golden, and the touch of the sea-breeze on his face brought back the

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

memory of the long, idle, happy hours spent with Gäidik on the green Atlantic waves, gliding from island to island, from rock-girt cove to rock-girt cove, in their yacht, as free and careless and whimsical as the sea-birds flocking about them, and he winced. The glory of the western sun lay ruddily over the river as he walked along the Brooklyn Bridge, and for a few moments he stopped, like one willing to seize upon a momentary distraction from painful thoughts, to gaze at the broad, placid stream, churned by the propellers of innumerable steam-craft, and widening southward between the two huge wildernesses of dreary brick to the beautiful blue bay and charming vista of green hills beyond.

Turning abruptly away, he hurried on, and presently reached a red brick building which formed the corner of a busy thoroughfare and a little, quiet street running northward from it, and, holding his resolution between his teeth—as one might say—entered a neat little office, where sat enthroned an eminently Hibernian-looking personage busily engaged in rolling a pencil to the top of his blotting-pad and catching it with mathematical precision over and over again as it came down. Beside him, and indulgently watching this harmless recreation, lounged a tall, raw-boned man with straight, square shoulders, chewing an unlighted cigar. He was clean-shaven, and there was that about his sleek head and somewhat harsh face which seemed to bespeak a sort of smooth and compact self-complacency.

“I am here to answer your advertisement,” Lōic said, in his ordinary, quiet way, although he felt intensely ashamed of himself.

The livery-stable owner nodded hesitatingly, an expression of extreme astonishment shining in his blue, Irish eyes, and, catching his down-rolling pencil, quite

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

haphazard this time, and with an inattentive hand, he threw it on the desk.

"You want a place as driver—here?" the other man interposed, abruptly, casting a sharp, shrewd look at this strange postulant, his perfectly cut, slightly worn attire, handsome person, and strikingly aristocratic bearing.

Lôic turned and looked at him in displeased surprise.

"Yes," he said, stiffly.

"So! What's the matter with you? Damned hard up, eh?" Then, noticing the angry light kindling in Lôic's eyes, he hastily added, with a smile that entirely transformed his face, "Now don't be huffy, it isn't curiosity that made me ask that; I wouldn't mind betting you're the very man I want to help me in a little venture of my own—the very chap I've been looking for!"

Lôic seemed in no great degree impressed by these flattering observations upon himself, and the hard look still lingered in his eyes.

"Suppose we bid our friend here good-bye, and you come along and have a bit of a drink with me," the energetic gentleman continued, decisively. "You're not the sort to sit on the box of a hired landau," he concluded, fervently, with a boisterous laugh, looking the young man up and down as he stood with one hand resting on the edge of the desk. And he, returning the look, could not repress a smile.

Knocked flat a score of times, Lôic was only waiting for his chance to pick himself up again and go straight on, hands down and heels ready to spur on success. He could certainly not afford to disdain any offer, and, although not by any means enchanted with this would-be patron's tone, he yet made up his mind with lightning-like rapidity to give him at least the benefit of the doubt

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

and to investigate the nature of the above-named "little venture."

William Larsen, the self-complacent, or rather "Stumpy," as he was called by his intimates—presumably because he was tall and thin and by no manner of means what this sobriquet implied—became after half an hour's conversation with Lōic filled with delight at the possibilities presented to his mental vision by the prospect of an association with such a man, and as time went on his good opinion of his own discernment, which was not small, certainly found no cause for drooping. He was a merry fellow, was "Stumpy," a man ever fond of his joke, and at first glance the living semblance of bluff open-heartedness. Nobody could accuse him of being reserved, and, therefore, he was never suspected of being extremely secretive—two qualities widely different, though identical to the popular mind.

As for his nationality, he proclaimed on all occasions that he was American to the backbone, though his name of Larsen plainly indicated the Swede. When reminded of this he was wont to answer that a Swede he had only been very long ago—before he was born—and that this was not his fault, but his misfortune! Of a truth, "Stumpy" was really a very slippery customer, ever on the alert to get the better of all those with whom he came in contact, and so clever and subtle, in spite of his constant boisterousness of manner, that many, even of the shrewdest, fell into his well-laid traps.

With Lōic he proceeded even more guardedly and cleverly than was his wont, explaining to him, with much finish of detail, that having set aside a cosey little sum of money from other successful ventures—of a nature unstated—he had determined to open a "Ladies' Riding Academy" in Brooklyn. For quite a while he

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

had had his eye upon a convenient, if rather dilapidated, building, which when whitewashed and trimmed up a bit would look "as smart as they make 'em"—this being one of his favorite expressions. What had until now delayed him was the impossibility of finding a partner who'd be a "real sport" and yet an honest man—a "gentleman" after his own heart—and when Løic ventured to interrupt him in order to point out that the first requisite of partnership—namely, money—was what he lacked most, friend "Stumpy" worked himself into a violent fit of indignation, declaring that there are assets far more valuable than mere bullion, and that did Løic possess millions, he, William Larsen, would not suffer him to risk one single cent of those hoards in this enterprise. The shrewd Swede acutely realized that this handsome young Aristocrat would be for him the best of drawing-cards; and, after seeing him once on horseback, his enthusiasm attained such heights of compliment that Løic, greatly annoyed, felt like chucking the whole thing and again trying his luck at some livery-stable.

However, the thought of his little Kikette and of all he could do for her should he be put in a position to earn something more than daily wages stopped him, and, with his old energy once more awakened, he threw himself body and soul into his new duties. He became at one and the same time "Stumpy's" buyer, trainer, riding-master, and general manager, and, thanks to his untiring efforts, two months had not elapsed before that worthy personage's "Ladies' Riding Academy" looked as well established and as prosperous as if it had been a paying concern for twenty years.

How could Løic have dreamed that the whole thing was a mere plant, that Larsen, ever on the lookout for swift and unscrupulous returns, was eager only to show

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

some well-to-do "sports" of his acquaintance an apparently brilliant opportunity for investment, and that when this ambitious goal was reached he would—but this is anticipating.

In the mean time, L^oic worked and hoped and grew once more cheerful, while "Stumpy" beat the big drum about his wide-open doors, and, by way of neglecting no detail, even the most unimportant, made great friends with Rose, whom he treated as a dear and honored relative, and even ingratiated himself with Kikette, invariably calling her "My Lady," and addressing her with a respect he did not even display towards his most glib patrons.

"Mouse," L^oic said, one morning, to her, "we've got a little pony at the 'shop'—this being his diminutive for "Stumpy's" magnificent riding academy—"a little pony that you could ride. Put on your hat and come along; while I'm working the 'young un's' in the ring, you can amuse yourself with it. Mamma 'll fetch you at mid-day." And thus, an hour later, Kikette and a small golden chestnut horse—the identical color of her own exquisite hair—possessed of a natty, clean-cut head and great, soft, intelligent eyes, were regarding each other with great interest.

"Well, well, My Lady!" quoth the enthusiastic "Stumpy," "now don't you two seem made for each other? Anybody'd take a fancy to this 'ere little hawse that 'd see him under you. Tell you what, come and ride 'im every day, and we'll give you a commission on the sale. Consider that, My Lady—just consider that!"

"That's a very good idea," Kikette answered, gravely, watching with approving eyes the careful way in which her papa's "partner" was settling the pony's bridle. "I'd

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

like to help Papa," she added, in her cool, patrician little voice.

"Stumpy" glanced up at the strange child, and then suddenly bawled out to Lōic, who, in the centre of the ring, was rebridling his own horse to his liking: "I say, Kergōat, why don't you take My Lady riding on *Tom Thumb* in Prospect Park? They make a picture, I tell you, and she'd sell 'im for us like hot cakes."

Lōic turned, flushing angrily, for the idea of enlisting Kikette in "Stumpy's" venture did not in the least appeal to him, and he was on the point of bidding his enterprising partner go to the devil, when Kikette herself took the law into her own hands, and so effectively did she coax and implore that she gained her point, and father and daughter were soon galloping side by side over the tan-bark of a shady bridle-path, checkered with the brilliant sunbeams of that peerless Indian-summer morning.

To say that Kikette and her little "hawse" attracted attention would be to use quite the wrong expression, for the early promenaders whom they encountered actually stopped short to gaze as long as possible after the dainty little Amazon and her handsome escort. Indeed, Lōic felt so proud of his little maid that he began to take a more lenient view of "Stumpy's" new idea. Why shouldn't Kikette ride daily with him in the park, after all? Poor child, she had so few pleasures! And watching her dancing eyes and the delicate color rising to her cheeks, he indulged in a dream of many such joyful outings in the near future. She was already such good company, too, quick and observant, and always with something to say for herself, that he spent that morning the most charming two hours he could remember for a long time. "As long as I have her," he mused,

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

unable to detach his eyes from the pretty, little, dauntless figure cantering bravely beside him, "how can I complain of anything?"

When they finally reached the "Academy," they found Rose awaiting them, apparently without too much impatience, for she was engaged in what seemed to be a most interesting conversation with "Stumpy"—in fact, so absorbed was she that it was only when they were almost upon her that she saw Lœic and Kikette, and then, her face resuming its usual sullen expression, she hurried the child away with a sharp, aggressive air which surprised Lœic not a little.

That evening he came home unusually late. He was to leave next morning for a forty-eight hours' trip to Boston, where his energetic "boss" had begged him to go and attend a horse-sale; and the thought of even so short a separation from Kikette, together with a vague but enervating feeling of dissatisfaction he could not have reasonably accounted for, made him take it rather amiss that his supper should not be ready, the rooms untidier and more inhospitable than usual, and his little pet already sent to bed.

"That's right," Rose said, peevishly, "scold me now after I've been washing all your white stocks and mending your riding-breeches till my eyes ached. You're never satisfied."

"Oh, look here, don't make me a scene, Rose," he said, wearily. "I'm dog-tired, and in no mood to put up with it. If there's nothing to eat in the house, there's no earthly use in making a fuss; I'll just step round to the avenue and get a bite somewhere."

"In order to rejoin your usual companions!" she snarled, lighting the gas and violently flying to and fro, her face pale with rage. "Do you think I don't know

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

where and how you spend every minute of your spare time?"

Lôic shrugged his shoulders, heroically bridling his temper. Two or three times of late he had returned to an empty board, but an altercation with Rose was too humiliating not to be avoided, if possible. Otherwise the obvious retort would have been that she had evidently been again chattering with the janitress, as she had lately fallen into the habit of doing for hours together, since the duties of their tiny establishment were certainly not onerous, especially considering the way she took them! But she, at once enraged by his refusal to reply, and elated at the apparent success of her attempt to carry the war into the enemy's country, cast all prudence to the winds, and in the course of her ensuing reckless harangue dashed a bowlful of soapy water so furiously into the sink that the rebounding suds struck him full in the face.

"Damnation!" he exclaimed, pulling out his pocket-handkerchief to wipe his eyes. "Be a little more careful, will you?" But she was now past caring what happened next, and, rounding upon him with dilated nostrils, she cried:

"What scent is that on your handkerchief? You don't have anything like that here! But why should I ask? Of course, it's clear enough where you get such pestilential perfumes from!"

Lôic, now far too greatly aroused to stand any more nonsense, took a step towards her, and as she bent forward to snatch the bit of cambric from him, as she once had done with the yellow rose-bud—the innocent cause of his disaster at "Squire Bob's"—departing suddenly from the astonishing courtesy he usually displayed towards her, he flicked her across the nose with it, saying, with a little sneer:

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

“How d' you like it? Is it to your taste?”

With a cry of fury she attempted to pass him and reach the closed door of the little room where Kikette lay asleep, but, divining her intention of avoiding the anger she had kindled by sheltering herself behind the child—a trick she had already played on two or three occasions—he caught her by both arms, and, sitting her down on a chair, said, sternly, his jaw set, his face white to the lips:

“None of that, my girl! You and I have got to come to an understanding, and that at once. I've stood all I intend to stand from you, and if you don't change your paces pretty soon I'll take Kikette away from you and go and live with her somewhere else. This is no longer a fit place for her.”

Although trembling now with terror, Rose, thoroughly exasperated by the jokes “Stumpy” had indulged in that morning relative to Lōic's successes with his lady pupils—jokes which to do him justice had not been meant evilly, but purely from a mere wish to tease her a bit—did not as usual collapse, but, eying him with astounding pertinacity, muttered something about being left, no doubt, to starve in solitude.

“Rubbish!” Lōic said, contemptuously. “You know very well that I'll never be either unjust or cruel to you, but as to allowing you to warp Kikette's mind with your eternal suspicions, which you do not even take the trouble to conceal from her or any one else—no! You are getting worse and worse, and life isn't possible under such conditions.” Then, rising angrily, he strode towards the door, and, banging it after him, left her to thoughts which were an almost equal mixture of rage, fear, and dismay.

At five the next morning he was gone, and she spent his short absence in loudly lamenting her unhappy fate

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

to the few people with whom she had become acquainted, and in writing a most plausibly desolate letter to her particular friend, Susannah Caulfield, a good-natured, simple-minded girl, to whom she explained that, crazed by persistent ill-luck, Lōic had taken to drinking heavily, and now so far forgot himself as to brutalize both her and poor little Kikette. "Indeed," she concluded, "heart-rendingly," in her peculiar English, "I fear much that we cannot remain with him great deal longer; you could not know him how he is now so changed, poor fellow. He is away for two, three days, and it is so bad that I fear now his return, I, who loved him so passionate. What shall I do? What shall I do?"

This pathetic and untruthful epistle was not written without an aim. Rose was really frightened, not in the way she intimated, of course, but at the possibility of Lōic's putting his threat—a purely idle one, uttered on the spur of an angry moment, as she should have known—into execution. But, feeling that she had a thousand times deserved such a punishment, she was all the more ready to believe in its being at last dealt out to her, and a plan that had been at the back of her mind for some time now began to take serious shape. Although Lōic's constant absences from home gave her great freedom, she had long resented the restrictions which his ideas and his habits placed upon her vulgar conceptions of pleasure and "social" enjoyment—all that she had left now that the glamour of wealth was gone—and she began to consider how to turn to her own personal account the various housewifely accomplishments which she was too much of a "lady" to employ except in a very indifferent fashion for the benefit of her present *ménage*. By cooking and sewing she could surely earn shelter for Kikette and herself at the Caulfields', and even some-

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

thing in money besides, perhaps, while she trusted to her wits to make them her allies and induce them to keep her whereabouts a secret. She had never yet failed to impose upon those whom she had set herself to deceive, even, alas, upon persons who ought to have known better, and who later on bitterly regretted their simple credulity! She was so plausible, so deft in twisting facts to suit her purpose, in weaving a web of falsehood out of miscellaneous odds and ends of truth! Then, too, though really in excellent physical condition, she had grown somewhat thin of late, which enabled her to be rather more ostentatiously small and inoffensive than usual, and if any other effects were required, it is easy—on the principle that three days' beard will pass a man into a hospital—to suggest ill-health, ill-treatment, and heart-break by a disarray that is purposely contrived, or merely slatternly.

"I'll show him that I can do without him, and that he can't do without Kikette," she reflected; "and then, when I've brought Monsieur le Marquis to his senses, I might even go so far as to marry him, if I knew I could hold him better that way. Everything is so different in America. Perhaps a wife has greater rights than in France!" Had she had money, she would have consulted a lawyer on this point, but real "brains" and money were two commodities that Rose sadly lacked, and she continued on her sullen way unadvised, excepting by a few low-bred women neighbors and by the shrewish Irish janitress of the little house, who, having hurried her own "man" off the premises by her vinegary tongue, was about the worst counsellor she could have found.

Meanwhile the pleasure of action had driven from Lóic's mind all recollection of his last scene with Rose. Throughout his little journey he felt steadily cheerful and imperturbably hopeful, a vision of almost assured success

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

rising vigorously in his mind. "Stumpy" was a good chap, after all, he said to himself, erratic and rather too original, perhaps, but still it was splendid of him to have picked up a penniless, broken-down chap like him, Loïc, made him his partner, and intrusted him with his most valuable interests. At the thought, his chivalrous nature urged him to do all that lay in his power—whatever the trouble, fatigue, or self-sacrifice—to further to the uttermost these sacred concerns.

On arriving in Boston, he found, much to his surprise, that the sale which he had come to attend would not take place till the next day but one, and, having put up at the hotel recommended by "Stumpy," he immediately sat down to write that worthy "sportsman" a letter acquainting him with this contretemps; then, as his purse was as short as his time was long, he went for a protracted ramble into the country, and, after a frugal dinner, to bed.

Late on the next afternoon, returning to his hotel from another interminable and wearisome *flânerie*, he was handed a registered envelope addressed in "Stumpy's" sprawling caligraphy, and, turning into the *café*, sat down to read it.

It ran thus:

"DEAR OLD CHAP,—I'm afraid that when you read this you'll feel like killing yours truly. Fortunately my poor bones will be out of reach of your iron fists! *Don't* be too hard on me, however, even in your thoughts, although I'm a scapegrace, and the trick I'm playing you deserves worse than a thrashing, but at last I have my opportunity of clearing a respectable number of thousands cheaply, and I'd be a fool not to take it. You're a simple one and won't understand, but take my advice, don't go back to the 'Academy'; you're supposed to be my partner, and my howling creditors might try and make you responsible; but no, see here, you can show them this letter if you like, I don't care a damn, for I'm off with the boodle to parts where they won't

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

easily find me! I've sold everything that was salable—at a loss, but what of that, it couldn't be helped—and if you take my advice you'll skip over to Jersey and let the storm blow over. I'm sorry, I assure you, and if I'd thought that you'd have consented, I'd willingly have gone shares with you, for you're the finest man I've ever known, which is just why I thought better of making you the offer. I enclose a yellow-back to meet your hotel expenses. I wish I dared to send more!

"Forgive me, old man, I wish I was sure 'My Lady' and you won't suffer. Rose is a bad egg and not worthy to black your boots.

"Well, I am off; very much ashamed of myself as far as you're concerned, but only so far. STUMPY."

The waiter, bearing down at last upon Lóic through the crowded room, an engaging smile upon his bland, sallow face, recoiled into a neighboring table, after one glance at this singular customer, who, with dilated eyes, was gazing at a letter trembling in his hands, and before the knight of the apron could recover himself, Lóic had risen, and, striding past him, had walked out of the *café*.

It would be quite useless to dwell upon the days that followed. All the hard years of training to misfortune, all the sad experience gained by contending with the inextricable meshes of the terrible net that had been gathering its folds round him since he had left Yffiniac with Rose, were powerless to lighten or to mitigate the rage and consternation which filled "Stumpy's" principal victim, and make this supreme blow less felling. With characteristic straightforwardness he hurried back to New York as fast as steam could carry him, and from thence to Brooklyn, where he quietly faced the exasperated mob left behind by the defaulter.

Standing up like a man to the most humiliating, the cruellest and hardest situation he had ever confronted, he gave a full and minute account of his relations with William Larsen. The narrative was clear, and not only

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

exceedingly coherent, but admirably adapted to the tempers of his audience, although the speaker himself felt that an even greater force and picturesqueness of phrase would have failed to do justice to his erstwhile chief.

Fortunately his innocence was so patent, his confident fearlessness so impressive, that a very short time sufficed to clear him completely. Nor did the occasion lack its little touch of humor, for one of the stablemen who had served under his orders—they were all fulsome in their praise of him, and unrestrained in their denunciations of the estimable Larsen—eulogized poor Løic to some of the assembled creditors in a speech that in spite of the circumstances capsized everybody's gravity:

"There isn't a dacenter gentleman than 'im in this blissed land," quoth the outspoken son of Erin, "with no more pride about him than an ass, and honist as our pig, who wouldn't take a bite he wasn't willin' to return twice over."

This unsophisticated statement put the finishing touch to a general sentiment in his favor, so that it was actually amid murmurs of commiseration and involuntary but none the less very deep respect, that the door of "Stumpy's" riding-school—gateway, alas, to the land of phantom hopes—closed behind Løic for the last time!

He went home that night, realizing for the second time in his life the incapacity to think. He felt crushed; there was an intense pressure on his brain and an intolerable weight at his heart. He had eaten nothing all day, and scarcely anything since Larsen's letter had reached him, and dreading to encounter Rose's recriminations while in that depressed and almost irresponsible condition, he turned into a bar-room before entering his peaceful little street, and swallowed a couple of stiff

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

drinks. The raw spirits acted promptly and powerfully upon his empty stomach and cleared his brain for thought, but did not, as he had hoped, induce a more philosophical view of the situation. What was he to do now, he pondered, as he wearily bent his steps towards his unattractive home. Make a clean breast of the whole matter to Gäidik and ask for her help? No! At least not yet! That she would eagerly respond he did not doubt for a moment, but he could not bring himself to confess to the only person whose opinion he valued what a total and wretched failure he had proved himself to be. There was yet work which he could do, and would at once apply for. One place he knew of where he could earn two dollars a day washing carriages, and two dollars a day would prevent Rose and Kikette from starving. He felt that he would sooner sweep the mud from the streets than surrender now, and, with teeth set and head held high, he ascended the dark staircase.

Rose had her chance then! Had she met him with tender sympathy, with a real comprehension of the distress and humiliation which this man was suffering so keenly, thanks to her alone, the day was won—but was it likely that she would do this? As a matter of fact, she did not, and received him, indeed, with so sour and bitter a mien, and his story with such a shrewish and angry storminess, that his whole being revolted. So this woman, with unkempt hair, with doubtful linen beneath a frowsy wrapper, and sullen, repellent face, was what he had sacrificed everything for—even Gäidik! He gazed at her blankly for a few seconds, and then suddenly his power of endurance gave way, and like a torrent forcing its path at last through the stoutest restraints, all that had lain dormant within him for so many years broke from his lips. He began at first with that semi-bantering light-

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

ness of manner, which was his when seriously touched, and which had puzzled and bewildered far cleverer people than Rose. He and she belonged to two stations in life as far apart as two stations could be, and they had never been "friends" in any sense of the word; for a long time they had been mere chain-companions, intensely alive—as such companions invariably are—to each other's shortcomings, and as the rancor of the past rose in waves about him to meet the exceeding misery of the present, Lōic's words borrowed from this dark conjunction accents which were no longer those of banter, and which made Rose shudder where she sat hunched up on the edge of a chair, looking at him furtively between down-cast lids. Never had he thus spoken, and noticing the slight odor of whiskey lingering about him, from those two unfortunate drinks, she decided that for her subsequent purposes he was drunk—dangerously drunk! That which surprised and terrified her most, however, was that he spoke slowly, almost softly, as he advanced with his awful *réquisitoire*—an act of accusation directed, for the matter of that, as much against himself as against her—the Kergōat temper had momentarily vanished, leaving behind it something which filled her with a far greater dread.

"And this," he concluded at last, "is what we have done, you and I!" Then suddenly he laughed.

"Oh, don't!" she gasped.

"Don't what?" he asked, sitting quite still, his sunken eyes fixed steadily upon her.

"Laugh!" she said, through her white lips.

"You may thank God," he said, in the same monotonous, utterly unemotional voice, "that I am what I am. Another man under similar circumstances might act differently. If I were not what I am, your future—would

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

be different; but you will perhaps know some day what you have neglected—what you have lost!”

“Oh-h!” she cried, as if he had hit her. “Oh-h, I hate you—you—you beastly Aristocrat!”

He merely nodded his head, and, turning away, walked quietly into the only corner of the little “apartment” which he could call his own, a mere closet, where trunks and boxes were piled up, but where, near the only window, stood a little table with his writing materials and Gaidik’s portrait leaning against a vigorous plant of Marguerites he had lovingly tended for months. In a corner stood a rickety cane lounge, and on that—after carefully locking the door—he flung himself at full length face downward, sobbing like a child.

In later days Løic de Kergoat could bring back to his memory no distinct recollection of how that night had passed. There was an indefinite remembrance of the steady, fatiguing rattle of the cable-cars on the neighboring avenue, and the raucous howls of some belated drunkards making the balmy autumn air hideous with their obscene songs somewhere in the distance, mingled with his blunted thoughts, as he finally glided away from the agony that shook him into the sleep of utter exhaustion.

A little square patch of sunlight surrounded Gaidik’s picture as he at last awoke, unrefreshed and aching all over, and for a long time he lay with eyes half closed looking at it. The usual healthy brown of his face had faded to an ashy tinge, and his hands were clinched at his sides. It seemed as if he were listening to some far-off sound in a total rigor of attention, and not one of his features moved. Presently, however, full consciousness began to return to his veiled eyes, and he slowly sat up with an expression of surprise. He could not quite understand

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

as yet what had happened, why he was lying there fully dressed, and especially why he did not as usual hear Kikette's merry laughter and gayly trotting little feet resounding on the carpetless floors. The faint surprise reflected on his haggard face deepened after a moment into anxiety, and, rising, he shook himself, and unlocking the door passed into the sunlit little kitchen, hoping to find the child there at her breakfast, as he always did when by chance he overslept himself; but it was empty, as were the neighboring bedrooms and bath. Never before had Rose taken Kikette out, when he himself was at home, without his permission, and a sudden pang of real fear made L^oic glance at his darling's small, curtained bed. Could it be possible that she was sick, and that the mother had gone for assistance, neglecting to call him in her resentment for last night. With trembling, hesitating fingers he pulled back the muslin draperies and bent over the white pillow. No, thank God! Kikette was not there; but what was that fastened by a long hat-pin, where his little maid's sunny head usually rested?—a closely written paper—and as once, years before, in the case of a parting maternal missive, he seized upon it with a heart full of black foreboding, and stood reading it in the golden morning light.

“You need not search for us. We are with those who will know how to guard us from discovery. Two or three times lately you have raised your hand as if wishful to strike me, and I don't care to await the moment when you do. I'll have to hold strong guarantees of altered conduct before I return to you again, or let you see Kikette, you may be sure! For years I have trembled before you and been your slave, but I'm tired of it now, as also of working for nothing. Half the labor I am doing here will bring me good wages, which, at least, will be something, and I'm going to try my hand at working for a reward. Later, when I think that you have had sufficient time to regret your brutality and injustice, I'll let you have an address where you

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET .

can write and tell me so. You were drunk last night, I am sure of it, and I can see nothing for Kikette and me in the future but starvation and blows, so *bien au revoir, mon vieux*, for the present! You can tell whom you please that I'm lying, if you like, you won't be believed; I've seen to that, and in America wife-beaters are not looked upon kindly. It's I who hold the whip now, thank God!

ROSE."

Lôic read this ignominy to the end, then swaying slightly, as if the ground were growing unsteady beneath his feet, he grasped the rail of Kikette's bed with both hands to support himself.

"What is the matter? What is the matter?" he muttered, helplessly. He stood rigid for a moment, and then suddenly tottered forward and fell across the little white cot.

CHAPTER XXV

Gray mist! gray mist! in a breathless pall,
Idle they swing to the swinging vast,
And the gray waves start from the smoky wall
Like memories from the past;
And a snaky Fear doth enfold the ship
As the chilling damp doth bead and drip,
And she faintly hearkeneth, twice, and thrice,
The surges gnash on the unseen ice.
Oh sing a world in a sodden shroud,
Of Faces glimpsed in the coiling cloud!
And whisper thin as their voices trist
As they fade and fail,
Gray mist! *The Voyage*—M. M.

DAY and night Lōic searched unremittingly. Wild with anxiety, almost distraught by horrible fears for his little Kikette, he haunted every place where there was the slightest chance that she could have been taken. Over and over again he appealed for assistance to the French Consulate, twice he went to Caulfield's Farm, and even—for the absence of his darling somehow suggested death to him—visited the hospitals and the morgue, but all his efforts were vain. Rose and Kikette had vanished as completely as if the earth had opened to swallow them. No neighbors could be found who had even seen them leave the house. Assistance Rose must have had, though, for she was without money, and since the Caulfields, whom he considered well disposed to him, denied all knowledge of the matter, he was forced to conclude that she had utilized the long hours of his absence at work,

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

or in search of it, to form some connections which she had carefully concealed.

It never for a moment entered his head that she had fled with another man—her lack of beauty and charm alone seemed to set aside that solution of the question; and, moreover, bad as he knew her to be, his honest nature could not assimilate the idea of her taking Kikette with her if doing such a thing.

About Rose's motives, however, he did not in the least concern himself, and he only considered them at all in the hope of chancing upon some clew to her whereabouts, as one may calculate the landing of a bullet by gauging the force behind it. All that affected him was the knowledge that something terribly essential had been torn out of his life, something the loss of which was like slackening the sinews of the arm, extinguishing the lamp within the brain and the fire within the heart—a loss that even more than physical fatigue made it seem impossible to hold up his head with the old erectness, or to walk without dragging feet.

Yet after the wild rush of the first few days, when it at last became apparent that there was no trail to follow, to remain inactive was an impossibility. Like a dogged swimmer whose strength is exhausted, but who, though blinded, dazed, and half conscious, still mechanically maintains a feeble stroke, he tramped the crowded streets hour after hour, questioning every policeman he met, or hanging aimlessly about railroad stations, and only returning to his deserted "home"—ah, what an irony lay in that word now—to snatch a few moments of nightmare-ridden sleep, from which he awoke with a sense of bewilderment and heart-emptiness that made him look more than once longingly at the revolver hanging above his bed.

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

Then, as soon as another morning had dawned, he was off again. He felt no hunger—he loathed the sight of food—and when at length his legs would carry him no farther, he choked down a mere bite with the aid of whiskey, in haste to resume his quest. He preferred the whiskey; it was cheaper (he had very little money left), and it seemed to dull sometimes that unrelenting pain as of some cord strained to the utmost tension within his breast.

At certain moments he wondered, with a throb of apprehension, whether his brain was not giving way; he caught strange inflections in his own voice which he knew had never been there before, and in his dry, stony eyes there was so terrible and hopeless an agony that he was conscious of the curiosity he aroused even in total strangers.

As day followed day, and hope grew less and less, Lōic slipped gradually into a state of despondent indifference that words would be inadequate to express. The world was like a dream to him, Kikette herself became a half-remembered vision of aching remoteness, life, indeed, resolved itself into an alternation of weary motion and exhausted slumbers that carried him off to a land of dreadful shadows.

At length, worn out in body and mind, he ceased his peregrinations about the city, and took to brooding in his empty rooms beside the wistful and deeply sympathetic Teuss. Here a heavy drowsiness frequently overtook him—sure sign that the shock of the crushing blow was beginning to pass away—and one morning, after having slept the clock twice around, he awoke, weak indeed, and with trembling hands, that, when he reached for anything arrived sooner than he intended, but clear in brain and confronted by a situation which gave the necessary spur to his reluctant energies.

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

His money was exhausted. The last month's rent, during a moment of comparative and provident affluence, had been settled in advance, so he had merely to make arrangements for the tradesmen's unpaid bills before seeking yet cheaper quarters. These, after placing his few poor sticks of furniture in storage, he found in a wretched lodging-house, far down-town, taking with him only one trunk containing his sadly diminished wardrobe and the few souvenirs he valued, among which were some small, broken toys—the last Kikette had played with. In a neighboring stable Teuss, the faithful companion and sole remaining friend, was housed in a backyard beneath a shed which would presently, during the coming winter, be but a poor protection against the severity of New York weather; but he, unlike his master, had so far taken no harm from their joint descent into those depths the innermost heart of which had now almost been reached.

These brief preparations made, he marched one morning into a livery-stable and enrolled himself as carriage-washer, this being the employment which, while paying enough to keep body and soul together, was the most mechanical and easily transacted of all, and afforded the greatest amount of leisure in which to still search for Kikette or—to brood. Had a higher position offered itself, it is doubtful whether he would have taken it. Ambition and energy were dead in him. What he wanted was Kikette, if he could recapture her, otherwise the means of existence and peace; peace and the cessation of torturing thoughts were all he desired—a dangerous state of mind for a man to fall into, and one fraught with obvious temptations.

After a few days Teuss was allowed to have quarters on the scene of his labors, but this small privilege—a highly prized one for both master and dog—was des-

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

tined in the fulness of time, alas, to be yet another source of sorrow.

Meanwhile the young Aristocrat, born to love, to fight, to defy death at the hands of enemies worthy of his steel, like his ancestors had done before him for many centuries, and to bear a brilliant part in some of those undaunted epics which raise life out of the sludge of commonplace to the level of an heroic past, clad in a coarse woollen shirt and an always amazingly clean pair of overalls, slaved away, brush and sponge in hand, at multifarious vehicles, as they returned mud-caked from picnic parties, funerals, weddings, or other such celebrations, grave or gay.

It was significant of the change in him that he was disliked and avoided by his fellow-employés, an aversion in which Teuss, partly because of his master, partly from the dog's own aloofness of temper, fully shared. Loïc, the friend of all the world, had always been adored by his inferiors, and more than ever so by those with whom, of late, evil fortune had placed him on a footing of equality; but that charm had gone from him with many other things, and in this haggard-faced, silent man his present associates only saw a person whose aspect, in spite of shirt-sleeves and blue jeans, was offensively suggestive of a superior social sphere, and whose cleanliness in the midst of a dirty occupation was little short of insulting. At the same time there was that about the new-comer that induced them to refrain from all direct expressions of their sentiments, though at times glances and muttered words passed from group to group which might have attracted a less inattentive ear.

His first Sunday "out" was employed in going once more to the Caulfields' farm, since he still could not help believing that Rose had confided her whereabouts to

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

them, and that they alone could put him on the right track. The farmer himself he could see but for a bare instant—he pleaded pressing business—but the women, fired by the fanaticism of what they deemed a worthy cause, played their part so well—what woman, even the simplest, cannot do so on occasion—that, more than ever heavy-hearted, he tramped wearily back along that road he had traversed so often a year ago. Then he had complained of his lot, but what was it compared to the unutterable pain he now endured?

Had he but known it, the women who had so glibly lied to him on that afternoon were, immediately after his departure, in receipt of an extremely vigorous and indignant rating from the husband and father, who, coerced by them, had reluctantly consented to leave the matter in their hands, and, manlike, was now cruelly sorry for it. He alone of that prim household did not quite believe Rose's tale of woe, and had been averse to receiving her beneath his roof after her flight. Indeed, he had flatly refused to let her remain there, and she and Kikette were now living with his buxom daughter Susannah, who had recently set up a little boarding-house in the neighboring townlet.

"Gumm it all!"—the farmer was a strict church-goer, and knew how to conveniently skirt profanity—"gumm it all!" he bellowed, angrily; "that poor chap isn't by a gummed sight as black as he is painted, and if it wasn't that I'd be disgracing you all by so doing I'd run after him this same minute and tell him the truth. I tell you what, Amanda," turning furiously towards his weeping wife, "you'll be sorry some day to have acted that cruel to him. I don't like this Mrs. Rose; she ain't straight, in spite of her meek airs; and the leetle gal, Keeket, who trembles in her teenchy shoes before her mamma—if you

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

want to know the truth—owned up to me that she'd never seen her daddy strike her. She cried as if her leetle heart would break when I asked her if she'd like to see him again. I don't hold with them furriners, Amanda, but he's a fine feller, drink or no drink, lies or no lies, and you're a pack of fools to help her out, as you're a-doing."

Never had the worthy and preternaturally silent pater-familias thus "unbuttoned his collar"—to use his own expression—and his tearful womankind sat as quiet as mice, trembling with terror.

"Ya-as," he resumed, striding violently up and down the stuffy "parlor," "Mrs. Rose's leetle ways don't suit me. Here she is playing waitress in pink gowns and frilled aprons to the pack of drummers and other gummed ijiots who board with Susannah. She likes it, too—you can see that with one eye closed—better than looking after her kid and her husband, and that while he is breaking his heart all alone workin' like a dog. Didn't you notice his hands? They're rougher than mine, and all swollen and scratched like. It makes me sick, d' you hear, to think on!" and, with a violent bang of the door, he left them appalled and dismayed, to go and air his wrath among his pigs and chickens.

The shallow-natured Rose was, as he had said, quite reconciled to her temporary lot. The feeling that she was punishing L^oic added delicious spiciness to her little *fugue*—punishing him with one last fell blow—for his self-forgetfulness, his long years of patient endurance, his boundless sacrifices! She, Rose Billot, had it now in her power to pay him back for not having loved her as she understood love, for having conferred every benefit, and given everything in return for nothing—and wasn't she enjoying this golden opportunity! Her flat, plebeian foot was on his proud neck, and with a relish which made

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

her positively lick her thin lips, she, metaphorically speaking, crunched her broad heel into his flesh, and said a dozen times a day, exultantly, to herself, "*C'est bien fait pour lui !*"

What means she had employed to silence and subdue Kikette was and remained a secret. She was not particularly unkind to her, nor did she really ill-treat her, for was she not her only trump-card? But still she was scarcely an ideal mother, and the child pined for her father. In a little while Rose meant, of course, to return to Lôic, who, to recover his darling little daughter, would naturally accept any terms she herself might choose to impose! Yes, she would then even, perhaps, grandly condescend to marry him—that is, if the news from Brittany seemed satisfactory to her. The Marquise de Kergôat, by the last reports, was not in good health, and had, moreover, never been very robust. Why, then, should she not *faire une fin*, and bag the strawberry-leaved coronet, together with Kergôat and all its inheritance of grandeurs and magnificences? What a final triumph for Mr. Lierre's "dishonored" and despised niece it would be!

That, after all, might perhaps be the best solution of the dilemma, and blithely she moved among her friend Susannah's free-mannered customers, with never a frown or a sulk now, laughing, joking, even dancing with them of a Saturday night in the dining-room, cleared of its dingy tables, for she held a privileged position as bosom friend of the "Madam," and took care to surround herself with a halo of romance which made the clerks and commercial travellers gasp with curiosity, although she now went by the plain and unaristocratic alias of "Mrs. Thompson."

Susannah, gullible and good-natured as ever, paid her

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

eighteen whole dollars a month, which were recklessly spent on gay prints for herself, bright ribbons for both her and Kikette, and numerous other trifles that rejoiced her vulgar pellet of a soul.

Ah, poor Lōic! bending over his muddy task, had he deserved quite all this—and what was to follow?

“If in one month from now I haven’t found my little Kikette, I’ll put my beastly pride in my pocket and write the whole truth to Gäidik,” this misguided and wretchedly unhappy man said to himself on the evening of one of the first really severe days of the winter. He felt utterly dejected and very ill, having caught a bad cold, thanks to his perpetually drenched condition and waterlogged, worn-out boots. Clearly he could not endure the present state of affairs much longer. His slender earnings barely fed him and his dog and paid for their comfortless respective lodgings. That afternoon, too, he had had an annoying affair, thanks to poor Teuss, who, hearing an intoxicated driver belonging to the establishment snarl at “that G—— d—— stuck-up pig of a washer,” as he was pleased to call Lōic, had suddenly flung himself at the fellow’s throat, and but for his master’s lightning-like interference would have instantly strangled him. There had been something of a *mêlée*, and the much-frightened and magically sobered coachman had taken himself off muttering revengeful threats. “I’ll remove Teuss from there to-morrow,” Lōic pondered while trying vainly to go to sleep on his hard and uninviting bed that night, “for there’s no knowing what that brute might do to him.”

Unfortunately, the brute had already acted, and when, at five o’clock in the morning, Lōic reached the stables, he found the splendid dog lying inert on his litter of straw, evidently ill. With a pang of apprehension tug-

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

ging at his heart, he went out again to procure some fresh milk for him, but, in spite of an honest effort to obey his master, Teuss could not swallow a drop of it, and the "Vet," instantly summoned, declared that it was a well-marked case of acute gastritis. At first it did not occur to Lõic that foul play had something to do with this, he was too dazed and upset to think, for the illness of his sole remaining companion and friend—canine though he might be—was no trifle to him; but as the dreary hours wore on, and the dog grew from bad to worse, a suspicion of the truth began to make its way into his worried brain.

Fortunately the tragedy was a short one, and an hour before dawn Teuss's golden eyes, that had been fixed upon his master during all his pitiful agony, in an astonished and pathetically helpless appeal, suddenly closed. A last shudder shook the huge body, and the fine head pillowed on Lõic's lap grew rigid.

Gently disengaging himself, he rose and stood for a few moments gazing at the gaunt form extended on the straw at his feet; then, with an impatient gesture, he drew the back of his hand across his eyes, and, bending, lifted the limp, astonishingly heavy mass from the ground as easily as if it had weighed but a few ounces, and carried it across a yard to the small office, where by chance that night the "Vet" in charge of the horses was sitting up, to be near a serious case of pneumonia contracted by a valuable "boarder" belonging to a wealthy patron. With his foot Lõic pushed the door open, and in a singularly calm voice said to the amazed watcher drowsing over a newspaper:

"Would you be so good, Sir, as to perform an autopsy on my dog. Of course I'll pay whatever you usually charge." The "Doctor" silently rose. He had often

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

puzzled over this singular carriage-washer, who bore himself like a Prince while working like four ordinary men, and suddenly, addressing him as an equal, he said, speculatively:

"Have you any special reason for wishing it—poison for instance?"

"Yes," was the short answer.

"Very well. I'll begin at once, then, but I don't want any pay, my dear fellow." And, without another word, he instantly set about his task.

When Lōic left the veterinary surgeon the cold, biting wind of the yard made him cough. He was walking slowly, with out-stretched hands, for, although the bleak day had begun to break, yet the gray, snow-laden atmosphere, contrasting suddenly with the warm light of the office he had just quitted, seemed almost darkness to him.

"Powdered glass!" he whispered twice, his lips scarcely forming the words, as he obstinately paced up and down near the side entrance used by the drivers arriving to assume their day's work. "Powdered glass," he murmured again, as if to sear upon his consciousness the appalling barbarity of the thing. Snow, in tiny, feathery flakes, was beginning to drop lightly from the low, brooding sky, and mechanically Lōic quickened his quarter-deck promenade.

A few men, carriage-washers like himself and stable hands, were now dragging drowsy feet across the pavement towards the stables, but he paid absolutely no attention to them, and kept his anxious eyes upon the half-open street entrance. Then, as a certain heavy-shouldered, burly form at last made its appearance, quicker than thought Lōic leaped to meet Teuss's murderer.

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

"You hound!" was all he said. There was a quick dive forward, a grip with iron arms, a backward step, and a heave—ah, what a heave! The bulky driver literally flew over Lōic's head to the other side of the yard, alighting, unfortunately for his antagonist's purpose, upon a heap of freshly removed litter. He had, however, scarcely staggered to his feet before Lōic was back at him, and had begun to scientifically pound him into a jelly. There was a general hubbub, several men sprang on Lōic from behind, and he disappeared in a tangle of arms and legs, fighting on even when pressed down by the sheer weight of numbers, struggling and writhing up from the ground and lifting bodily the mass of his adversaries with him as a stag does the pack of worrying hounds before the "death." Then some one ran for an officer, and, with a derisively gasped "Ten to one as usual!" Lōic was overpowered and taken, together with the badly damaged driver and several of his more or less disabled friends, to the nearest police-station. But in the rear of the procession walked the "Vet," who, witness of the incident, was muttering mingled curses and praise in his short-pointed beard, and who, as it happened, being the son-in-law of the captain of police on duty, determined to pull "that brave French lad" through, if it was in his power to do so.

It apparently was, for, long before fashionable New York opened its eyes that morning, Lōic, bruised, battered, with one shoulder sprained, and still inwardly raging as if all the demons of hell were making sport of his soul, stopped at a bar-room, purchased a bottle of whiskey, and, carrying it beneath his uninjured arm, sought his miserable room, where he deliberately drank it to the last drop before throwing himself upon his bed.

"No money, no job, no home, no hope!" he said, aloud,

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

with a little, sneering laugh, as he stretched himself sleepily to his full length, "and I don't care a damn any longer!" he added, defiantly, closing his burning eyes to the ghastly morning light filtering through the dirty window-curtains.

His arm was so painful and swollen when he at last awoke that, dressing himself, he walked to the French Hospital to have it attended to. "A pauper's way—but what else am I?" he reflected, bitterly, as he crossed the dismal threshold of the gloomy building, which he was not to leave for several days, since the examining physician, at the sound of his cough and the sight of his flushed, feverish face, consigned him, after asking him a very few questions, to a long, white ward, which strangely reminded him of that of Pernambuco.

During the quiet hours he spent there he had full time to ponder over his situation, and he had almost made up his mind to write at once to Gäidik, when he received news from her, thanks to his friend the veterinary surgeon, who frequently came round to visit him, and offered to go to the post-office on his behalf. There were two letters from her—strange that he should have forgotten the *poste restante* of late—and he seized upon them with feverish, delighted hands. Both contained substantial checks, and this instantly altered his immediate plans by giving him the means to institute a last and more complete search for his little Kikette. Moreover, Gäidik—he read it between the lines—was herself going through difficult and sorrowful moments, and on no account would he just then add to her trouble. Surely she had already suffered enough on his account, he regretfully thought, smoothing the closely written sheets upon his counterpane, so he must endeavor to pull through a little longer without alarming and hurting her.

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

Poor little Gaidik! She, too, was unhappy, and betrayed so much distress at her prolonged and enforced separation from him that Lóic cursed both their lucks beneath his breath.

There was also a letter addressed in the well-known round hand of Ghislain d'Yffiniac, which, had it not been for the stimulus of the other two, he could scarcely have ventured to open. All that life of which it would speak was separated from him by such a bitter gulf! But, as it was, he drew a long breath and doggedly set himself to hearken across that abyss to the lengthy chatter of his old friend.

Madame de Kergoat, it appeared—whom, by-the-way, Ghislain had only seen at a distance, for, of course, they were still at daggers-drawn—seemed haughtier and more obstinate than ever, but shockingly altered in looks; indeed, her glorious, raven hair was now streaked with silver, and her face drawn and harsh and lined; old Kerdougaszt was no more, and his stalwart sons lived now quite alone in their ruined tower; Kadok, too, had joined the majority, having been drowned in a magnificently reckless attempt to rescue the crew of a sinking sardine-boat during a fearful midsummer storm; the Riviers were both prosperous exceedingly — God afflicts only those he loves, which is a consolation, no doubt, for the afflicted! Gynette was travelling about the world, alone, and, as Ghislain put it, "*inabordable et farouche comme Diane elle même!*" Lóic sighed. "What a fool I have been!" he muttered, and resolutely folded and put away a letter so conducive to melancholy musings. Nevertheless, the crisp rustle of Gaidik's checks acted upon him as no medicine could have done, and the lingering remnants of his attack of grippe were so successfully blown away by the hope of all he could now achieve with

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

their help that two days later he was given his discharge from the hospital.

Private detective agencies—God save the mark!—swallowed with prompt avidity—and without attaining, alas, any result—the sum which had seemed, comparatively speaking, so large to Lœic, and once again he found himself no nearer his cherished aim, and practically penniless. Now was the time for him to give up, and he knew it. The winter was an extraordinarily severe one, and, as Christmas approached, his heart completely misgave him. On several occasions lately, in his despair and misery, he had risked the succeeding sense of shame and degradation and yielded to the overwhelming temptation of temporarily forgetting his wretchedness in drink. At first he hated the stuff, and shuddered when bolting down the rapid and numerous doses required to bring about the heavy, dreamless sleep, the mental annihilation he longed for; but, alas, only too soon the necessity of stimulation—or of escape from tormenting thoughts—begot that desire for the thing itself, which has been the undoing of so many, and with singular lucidity and singular indifference to his subsequent fate, he judged himself a lost man.

He was now living on the top floor of a small Raines-law hotel, down-town. His room was a dismal one—a suicidal place, gloomy, dirty, shameful. Its faded and worn carpet was patched, here, there, and everywhere, with variegated remnants of long-departed predecessors. The narrow, thinly matted bed, covered by a grimy counterpane, stood in one corner facing a crooked basin-stand, while the chronically unwashed window commanded an extensive view of flat roofs, whereon miserable rags were hung up almost perpetually to dry. In default of blinds or curtains, Lœic had nailed an old

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

horse-blanket before it, looped up during the day by a leathern strap fastened to the lintel. Moreover, the atmosphere of this attractive apartment was permeated with the liquorous odors ascending perpetually from the bar below stairs, mixed with the sour pungency of the neighboring fish markets, the greasy fragrance of cheap restaurants, and the all-embracing fumes of stale beer sifted from other countless drinking saloons and "dives" near by.

Late one afternoon, when a dense fog blurred the rooftops in a morose, depressing sea of grimy shadow, pierced at intervals by rusty iron smoke-stacks and the gaunt chimneys of many factories, Lōic, resisting the temptation of stopping at the "hotel" bar as he came in, climbed up the foul, dark staircase and let himself into his room, a sneer curling the corners of his mouth at the thought of the paltry victory he had just won over himself.

For a few moments he walked up and down the filthy carpet, beneath which he could feel the rough, disjointed flooring at every step, and a twinge of utter desolation penetrated his whole being. A chill, sour wind was blowing in from the half-open window, and the sudden transition from the congested streets to this cold, hopeless-looking place struck him to the very marrow. The sense of how comforting just one swallow of whiskey would be suggested itself imperiously, but he repulsed it vehemently, his better nature savagely holding on to the promise he had given himself of trying to find out if he was absolutely dead to every courageous impulse.

This moment of complete revolt against temptation surprised him, for it had seemed impossible to him lately to reconquer himself in this life woven about with snares, and throughout the dismal day a terrible fit of the blues had lain upon him as heavy as lead. Sometimes in the

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

hurry and bustle of the streets, his misery was temporarily lost sight of, but from early morning to the present hour everything for once had seemed to him but one horrible and profane nightmare. And now—well, there was a momentary blotting out of all else for him save this tenacious resolution to combat his weakness.

Suddenly he stopped in his nervous promenade before the small shaving-mirror hanging beside the blurred window, blinked his magnificent gray eyes three or four times as he looked at his thin, hard face, and with unutterable rage muttered to his own image, "*Salaud Va!*"

There he stood with raised fist, as if about to annihilate his reflection in a shiver of broken glass; then slowly he let his hand fall to his side, and became plunged in a sort of horrified wonderment.

Even to this man, whose life for years had scarcely ever run through one month without getting entangled in some difficult knot or other, the present horror of the situation gave an unconquerable shock. Again he experienced the nameless terror from which he had suffered after poor Teuss's death, but in an aggravated form, for then his health had still been fairly good, his strength not greatly impaired, while now he felt ill and like one definitely wrecked and floating on a yielding spar upon an ocean of black despair.

What would come next, he asked himself, as sitting on the narrow window-sill he vaguely watched the wreaths of soot-tainted fog drift over the wet roofs. Forty feet below, the tortuous, busy, crowded streets twisted and wriggled through slime and gloom, filled to overflowing with men hurrying home from their offices, and racing to reach the elevated railroad stations before the great rush, if possible. From lower yet down-town the awful crowds elbowed and pushed their way like a horde of ravenous



STREET IN THE VILLAGE OF KERGOAT

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

wolves. Old and young, well and badly dressed boys, girls, women, and men, poor and rich, speaking every language under heaven, jostling, grumbling, belated, hurried along amid the roar of continual traffic, the whistling of trains and ferry-boats, the stamping and grunting of the huge dray horses dragging behind them pyramids of barrels, rolls of leather, or of printing-paper and other merchandise of a more or less unsavory kind through the fierce entanglement of electric cars, automobiles, cabs and carts, in this ghastly labyrinth.

A deep abhorrence of his present fearful existence rose up in him like some nauseating tide of mud, and for a moment he longed to throw himself from that dizzy window-sill upon which he sat, so as to end the struggle now, immediately, once and for all, down there beneath the stamping hoofs and crunching wheels.

But no! A Marquis de Kergoat does not yield to the supreme and cowardly temptation of suicide. There was no help for it, he must live on for the present, live on as best he could—or as evilly, he reflected, with his grim, heart-rending little sneer—until Gäidik rescued him—for it had come to that at last, he must write her the shameful truth.

A wave of furious disgust rose within him, and with a curse he jumped up and groped his way through the now almost absolutely dark room to a twisted gas-bracket to which he applied a match. As he did so his feet came in contact with the once natty steamer trunk which had followed him in all his descending peregrinations, and where he kept the wreck of his sumptuous wardrobe and his few last souvenirs. It was now very much battered, but the lock was a good one and had defied the deft and practised hands of the "hotel" servants—this word "hotel" always made him laugh in connection with the wretched establishment he lived in.

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

Stooping swiftly, he drew a key from his pocket, and kneeling on the floor flung back the heavy lid. Impatiently he threw aside the upper tray, and bent over the curious collection of objects jumbled together below it. A withered branch of holly, a broken amber cigar-holder, half a dozen pocket-books and card-cases, from which silver and gold crests and coronets had been ruthlessly torn, a gay cerise-silk cowboy handkerchief, some spurs and curb-chains hopelessly entangled, a beautiful writing-case exquisitely embroidered by Gäidik's hands, but frayed and torn, were emptied out, together with boots, shoes, and slippers, all much the worse for wear, riding-trousers, pierced by long usage even through the reinforcing leather, and a mass of poor, dilapidated ties once perfect in make and color.

Quite at the bottom of the trunk lay an ungainly bundle wrapped in brown paper, loosely tied with a string, and a broad pasteboard box; these he took and flung upon the rickety table, the hideous red-and-yellow cover of which was to him a constant eyesore and nightmare. Then, still surrounded by the litter of heterogeneous articles, rising like a tide about his feet, he sat down on a dangerously shaky chair, and, drawing the table towards him, opened the pasteboard box with slightly unsteady hands.

Within, photographs were tightly packed, pictures of friends long lost sight of, of women who had loved him, of distinguished men, diplomats, soldiers, sailors with whom he had consorted — nay, several large-sized ones, bearing the autographs of Sovereigns with whom he had been *persona gratissima*, and which would have fetched a high price in the American society market — but, thank Heaven he had not come to that yet! His face became more and more clouded as he fingered

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

them, and bitter thoughts of wrongs done to him, of numberless injustices and cruel sorrows and disappointments, surged up in his mind, his nostrils dilating, his upper lip contracting until his even, white teeth became visible.

For several minutes more he turned the pictures quickly over, his hands grasping and relinquishing them nervously, until he came upon a square portfolio of royal blue leather clasped with exquisitely wrought silver *Fleur de Lys*—this was intact, and he held it moodily, gazing at its untarnished splendor amid all those ruins, with a sort of mocking surprise. Outside, rain, mixed with sleet and snow, had begun to fall heavily, and the big drops pattering on the window-sill made a mournful accompaniment to his thoughts.

At last, with a curious, feverish agitation, he unfastened the catch, and there before him stood revealed Gäidik, in Court dress, in riding-habit, in hunting-cos-tume, in ordinary street attire, in profile, full-face, three-quarters, but always "his" little Gäidik, the dear "com-rade" of childhood days, the tender and loyal sym-pathizer of all his sorrows, the dispenser of his few real joys.

Why had he not listened to her? Why, at least, had he not long ere this turned to her for help—and as of old for comfort and consolation? Ah, yes, he had indeed been a wicked, wicked fool! And softly closing the port-folio he reached out for his writing-case, eager not to lose another minute before retrieving this folly of pride and obstinacy which so long had kept him silent. As he feverishly searched for pen and note-paper, a handful of vari-colored pawn-tickets fluttered to the ground, and impatiently he bent to pick them up, glancing involun-tarily at each individual one as he did so. There was,

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

indeed, a very complete collection there, ranging from the earlier ones that testified to the remarkably disproportionate sums loaned upon the black pearl studs Gaidik had given him after his return from Pernambuco, the Bréguet repeater and matchless engraved sapphire seal-ring—his mother's presents on his twenty-first birthday—and many other costly articles of a similar nature—to the pitiful reminders of more recent moments when he had shamefacedly pledged every object he possibly could do without, even much-worn wearing apparel, pipes, boots, and riding-gear.

With an impatient sigh he threw the lot into the open trunk, and drawing his chair to the table, once more buckled down to the task of writing the most painful and humiliating letter he had ever penned. Page after page he wrote, never hesitating, hardly ever raising his eyes from the paper, and when he at last stopped, he shook the loose leaves together and counted them—there were ten—with a feeling of supreme astonishment at the facility with which this confession, so long dreaded, had been accomplished; then he rose from his seat, and, snatching up his hat and thin, spring overcoat—the only one he now possessed—hurried off to the post-office, dreading to find it already closed.

At a run he traversed the distance separating him from Broadway, but, glancing at the big City Hall clock, slackened his pace, for it was still much earlier than he had imagined—indeed, so absorbed and full-hearted had he been while writing that he had performed, without being aware of it, a most surprising literary feat in record time, describing the events of years in a frank, concise, nay, a truly masterly fashion, which no knight of the pen, even the ablest and most concise, could have hoped to excel. *“Il faut avoir vécu ce que l'on*

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

écrit!" the greatest of French writers has truthfully said.

Moved by an impulse which he himself could not have explained, Lōic, before posting the bulky envelope already half-drawn from his pocket, turned towards the *poste-restante* window, not that he had great hopes of finding anything there, but just because it seemed the thing that should first be attended to, and to his extreme surprise two letters were thrown before him on the narrow ledge, the uppermost one from Gäidik, the second—were his eyes playing him a trick, or was the second really from Rose?

Trembling from head to foot, he sought a deserted corner beneath an electric globe and tore it open with fingers which had suddenly turned ice-cold. The pointed characters of the well-known writing traced as ever in violet ink fairly danced before him, and it was only by using all that remained of his self-control that he could at last force himself to master the faintness insidiously creeping over him—nay, even when he had read the short note four times over did he grasp anything further than the blissful fact that Kikette was well, and that should he, Lōic, consent to send to a given initialled address a solemn promise not to attempt to detain the child, she would be allowed to come and spend Christmas Eve with him, under safe escort—this heavily underscored.

What mattered to the young father, shaking there beneath the pulsating electric light as if suddenly stricken with ague, whether Rose had been actuated by tardy remorse, or whether—as was really the case—dire necessity was the true cause of this first step towards a *rap-prochement*. In days gone by he might have puzzled, might have very likely reflected that this offer was the result of disappointment with a self-selected way of life,

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

perhaps of the impossibility of continuing this very mode of existence; but now all Løic thought of was that in less than a week he would again hold his little Kikette close to his heart—that heart beating just now, as it often had of late, so violently and irregularly against his ribs! This despaired of joy fairly suffocated him, and drawing his handkerchief from his pocket he wiped the perspiration from his forehead and the palms of his hands before opening the second letter.

“Ah, my little Gäid!” he whispered, as a check fluttered from it to his feet. “So it is again you who will make it possible for me to treat Kikette worthily!” And with a little gasp, which was almost a sob, he tore out of the post-office and home beneath the now heavily falling snow, without even being conscious that he had eaten nothing since morning and was utterly played out.

CHAPTER XXVI

Dark night! dark night! and the clouds hang low,
The blackness lights with the flashing foam,
And a broken spar that heaveth slow
In the dead waves, drifting home.

Oh well the day would reveal indeed
The crust of shell and the trail of weed,
The scar and seam of the ebb and flow
Since a ship went down in the long ago!

Oh! mourn that lip-bitten agony,
The last grim swirl of the grisly sea!
And moan with the winds of the headland height

And the surfless sands,

Dark night!

The Voyage—M. M.

THE deep-red curtains were drawn carefully over the windows; in the open fireplace several logs crackled gayly; and beneath the four lighted gas-jets of a passably tasteful little chandelier, Lōic stood at the small centre-table busily engaged in decorating a diminutive Christmas-tree, proudly rising from a square, green china box.

None would have known him again for the haggard, sombre, miserable man who had entered the General Post-office five days before. There was now a brightness in his eyes and a color in his face which transformed him completely, and made him almost again the Lōic of the past, and as he worked he actually sang a gay little Breton sailor song, the refrain of which rhymed remarkably well with his thoughts:

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

“Vive, vive, vive la Bretagne!
Vivent, vivent, vivent les Bretons!
Comprenan Ket
Ar Gallek:
Préguet, préguet
Brézonnek!
Vive la Bretagne—Vivent les Bretons!”

He had put his time and money to good use since then; beginning early the next morning by quitting his dismal quarters at the Raines-law hotel, and hiring for a month—paid in advance—the first-floor front rooms and bath of a quiet little house in an up-town side street owned by a worthy elderly widow, who kept but a few select lodgers to eke out her slender income. He then had proceeded to add some long-needed necessaries to his attire, and with a heart rendered light as a feather by hope and happy anticipation, had gone on a grand shopping expedition with a view to preparing more than one delicious surprise for his little Kikette.

How greatly he had enjoyed this none but a poor devil who has been weaned from every joy, even the smallest, for many dreary months could realize, and with characteristic self-forgetfulness and generosity he had spent quite a little fortune on choice toys and dainty refreshments, not to forget the tiny Christmas-tree and its various luxurious appurtenances, which had cost him endless thought and cogitation.

Holding a silver-clad angel in one upraised hand, he now stepped back to judge of the best nook wherein to enthrone this glorious little personage among the clean-smelling, crisp branches which already bent beneath their glittering load of tinsel trifles and rose-hued candles.

“That’s it!” he murmured, with a laugh, as he triumphantly set it astride a fuzzy twig immediately above the hoary head of a richly fur-wrapped Santa Claus.

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

"Couldn't be better!" And again the refrain of his song filled the festive little room:

Vive! vive la Bretagne—Vivent les Bretons!

"Lor', Sir!" exclaimed his landlady, who had twice knocked without being heard, and had just pushed open the door. "Lor,' Sir, but you did make the place look purty! How did you manage to fix up all those garlands of holly and mistletoe around the ceiling in so little time?"

Lôic turned quickly on his heel. "Oh, is that you, Mrs. Cramp? I was just going to run down and interview you about the chocolate you promised to be so kind as to make for my little girl! You know she'll be here in less than an hour now, and it's such beastly weather that she'll need something warm to drink at once!"

"To be sure, Sir! To be sure!" the good lady acquiesced. "But you should take something comforting yourself; you must be fagged out working like that since early morning. I'm sure you didn't even trouble to go out and get yourself a bit of lunch?"

"To tell you the truth, I did forget," Lôic said, laughing, as if mentioning the best of jokes. "But come here, Mrs. Cramp, I want to show you this little monkey dancing on his barrel-organ. Isn't that the funniest thing you ever saw?" And with eager hands he took from its tissue-paper wrappings a mechanical toy, the price of which would have kept him in comfort for many a day only a short week before, and which made the honest Mrs. Cramp almost weep with admiration. Every present was displayed separately to her, and it was only when she had tasted the bonbons and had smacked her lips over a few of the hot-house grapes lying in readiness on a prettily decked side-table that he at last consented to

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

let her bustle down-stairs again to make him what she called "a strong cup of coffee and a couple of nice, thin slices of buttered toast," which dainties she brought up and forced him to partake of instantly under her maternal supervision.

Snow was falling thickly all over New York, decking it in a gleaming mantle of exquisite whiteness for the coming holidays; and as Lōic, left alone once more to the enraptured contemplation of his elaborate preparations, peeped between the window-curtains to watch for his little Kikette's approach, he wondered whether in all that big, overgrown, busy city there existed just then one more joyful papa than himself.

Soon, however, a little impatience began to taint his light-heartedness. The hour appointed was passed by fully fifteen minutes, and, restlessly snatching up his cap, he ran down to the front-door, for fear that Kikette's "reliable escort" might in the gathering gloom miss the house. For a long time he stood on the fast-whitening steps, darting alert glances from one end of the street to the other, and finally, after a swift run to his rooms to see whether everything was still in the same exquisite order—the chocolate steaming by the fire and the paper spills wherewith to light the candles undisturbed—he took to pacing up and down from one avenue to the other in intolerable restlessness, beneath the densely falling flakes, conjuring up in his excited mind all the catastrophies which might cause so unaccountable a delay.

An hour went by, then another, but still no Kikette, and, nearly beside himself with anxiety, Lōic retraced his steps for the last time and sought his quarters with the ridiculous hope that the child might perhaps have slipped by him in the darkness and that she was even now waiting for him up there.

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

He took the stairs in four bounds, and impatiently pushed the door open, to be greeted, of course, but by fresh disappointment, and, with a hopeless glance of misery at the pretty array, the delicate *gôlter*, the brilliant fir-tree standing, as it were, sentry-like on the threshold of so much promised joy, he sat wearily down for a moment.

He had hardly done so when a loud tap made him bound to his feet, glowing with hope again, to be confronted in the doorway by Mrs. Cramp's Hibernian slavey, holding a letter in her hand. "This is just afther being left by a man for ye," she said, devouring the magnificences around her with eyes opened to their uttermost extent.

"Is he waiting?" asked Lōic, through parched lips.

"No, Sor, he runned away like a thafe," was the pleasing answer, and, with an idiotic, nerve-splitting laugh, she was gone.

"Having learned how low you have fallen," wrote Kikette's mother, "I have made up my mind to put off sending my child to see you until your ways of life are different. Some friends of mine saw you disgustingly drunk several times, so there's no use in denying it. I cannot expose Kikette to such a revolting spectacle. Besides which I have made up with my present employer the quarrel that induced me, in a moment of anger, to write you the other day, so we will remain as we are for a little longer, if you don't mind."

Calmly, quietly, Lōic folded the paper, thrust it into his pocket, and, crossing over to the fire, mechanically removed the chocolate from its immediate vicinity. In the same almost automatic fashion he closed the bonbon boxes, swept the paper spills into the grate and the neatly tied-up gifts onto the sofa, then he put on his thin coat

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

and hat, carefully brushing them both first, and, standing in the middle of the room, one hand on the catch of the last remaining gas-jet, he said, aloud, while turning it out, "And now I'm going to justify my reputation and get "disgustingly" drunk."

Four days of such carousing as he had never even dreamed of before left Lõic a physical as well as a financial wreck, and, when he at last returned to his rooms, his landlady cried out at the mere sight of him.

"For the Lord's good sake, Mr. Kergõat, what have you done to yourself?" she exclaimed, her chubby face puckered up with alarm. "It's too bad. You must go to bed, and that at once, too," she continued, preceding him briskly up the stairs and speaking in her maternal, fussy way, but he merely nodded his head, and, while she was down-stairs "after a cup of scalding hot tea, to put life into you," as she explained, he hastily gathered a few last remaining objects of slight but "pawnable" value into a hand-bag and noiselessly slipped away again into the night.

He was frightfully shaky, and the prolonged whistle of an elevated train, screeching suddenly above his head, made him jump almost out of his boots; also, it seemed to his weakened eyes as if threatening shadows dodged his steps, stretching menacing arms towards him from every sombre nook all the way to the Bowery, where at last he arrived, bathed in perspiration, spite of the weather's truly arctic temper.

"Only two tollars dis dime," the Jew said, contemptuously pushing to one side, with repulsively dirty fingers, the objects Lõic had silently placed on the counter, but, raising his red-rimmed eyes to the set, desperate face before him, he added, craftily measuring the broad shoulders of his customer: "If you should habben to know

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

somebody to vatch my goots turing the rest of de holidays, I vould villingly bay him dat sum for efery night. I haf tiamonds of crate value here, and I am not quiet apout them chust now, mine vriend." He had had dealings with Lõic before, and accorded him a respect which was partly the result of a really keen insight into human nature and partly due to the large profits he had made on earlier and far more important transactions.

"All right," Lõic said, curtly, pocketing the two filthy greenbacks. "When do you wish me to begin?"

"At vunce, mine goot vriend—at vunce. I am chust going to glose up, and if you vill badrol bevoor my vindows I vill bay you at seven o'clock do-morrow morning ven I gome."

Those were sinister nights in the broad, deserted, foul-smelling thoroughfare, where the bitter winter blasts chased one another from doorway to doorway, while on their whistling course down side streets towards the fog-shrouded, ice-laden waters of the river; the weather was relentless in its cruelty, snow giving place to sleet and sleet to squalls of freezing rain, with tireless perseverance, and Lõic, keeping his weary vigils from midnight to seven, made the acquaintance of more horrors than even he had ever suspected the world could encompass.

One thought alone sustained him. He had, late on Christmas Eve, posted the letter to Gäidik held back until Kikette's promised visit should show him how the land would lie in the future—forgetting, unfortunately, in the turmoil of the moment, that it did not contain his new address—and all he now desired was to keep body and soul together until his sister rescued him. His pride was so utterly broken that he barely resented

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

his present mode of earning enough to accomplish that aim; and yet when, on New-Year's Eve, he arrived at his post, through streets crowded with merrymakers, exasperatingly blowing on tin trumpets, and had dutifully received the Jew's instructions to "Be very alerd, mine lat, on agound of de toughs," his eyes puckered queerly as he murmured to himself, swinging on his heel to commence his endless promenade in the teeth of a cutting northeaster: "Pretty work for—my—father's son to do! So ennobling! So grand! So worthy!" And the wind having extinguished his cigarette, he thrust his hands deep into his pockets, and, turning up his threadbare, flimsy collar, resumed his round.

Slowly the ice-shod hours wore on, desperately, slowly, especially as long as the turmoil inherent to December 31st in New York lasted; and when at length the tin-horn blowers had departed, leaving the snow and a few warmly coated policemen—who nodded sympathetically to Lóic now and again—in sole possession of the desolate Bowery, the latter was forced to accelerate his steps in order not to literally freeze alive.

Towards four o'clock he paused for a few moments, thoroughly exhausted, in a deep doorway, to recover his breath, for the wind cut like razor-blades, and his chest hurt him surprisingly with every inhalation of the deadly atmosphere. By the light of a forlorn street-lamp he noticed a poor, little, half-frozen sparrow, who, like himself, had sought shelter in that partially screened corner, and who, with lamentably flurried feathers, cowered in its farthest angle. Stooping quickly, Lóic gently lifted the shivering bird from the ground, and, holding him between his numbed fingers, looked curiously at him.

"We are incorrigible rowdies, you and I—eh, little

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

chap?" he murmured softly, standing slightly twisted to one side and patting the ruffled wings with one finger. "Hopeless scamps, both of us; still, it is not right that we should be perishing with hunger and cold like this, is it?" The bright, jetty, twinkling eyes seemed to wink acquiescence and implore assistance at one and the same time so drolly that with a short, shamefaced laugh Lōic slipped the pitiful mite within his waistcoat—where, to be truthful, but little warmth was to be found, alas!—then, with a more cheery "And now let's patrol some more," he faced the weather with renewed courage.

At that very moment Rose was romping with a party of Susannah Caulfield's paying guests to the accompaniment of a cracked piano and a weezy accordion, the bad feeling between her and her simple-minded employer a thing of the past, and her own confidence in the future wholly restored. She had often put her one talent to excellent use in convincing cleverer people than poor Susannah of the integrity of her cause against Lōic—people who should have known better, and who believed her in spite of themselves—perchance a great actress had, after all, been lost in her; and, gayly relying upon the fruition of the second dose of punishment she had administered to Lōic, she vaguely determined—being in a particularly jovial mood—to write him again in a little while—yes, even to let him see Kikette, if he deserved it—never dreaming that this time she had perchance drawn the net so tightly that he might never get free from its throttling meshes again.

Slowly the night wore on, and just as Lōic was going to quit his beat in search of a few hours of sorely needed rest, a fluttering at his breast reminded him of his feathered protégé. Slipping his hand within his waistcoat, he produced the captive and tossed him into the slightly

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

thawing air. With a sharp little cry, the sparrow flew to a telegraph wire overhead, and thence looked downward at his rescuer in an alert and independent fashion, shaking his cramped wings, puffing out his chest, and flirting his absurd tail from side to side.

"Is that how you say 'Thank you'?" Lōic remarked from the sidewalk below. "You're very human—which means that, after all, you're not more ungrateful than other friends that I've obliged. Good-bye, little chap," and, with an amused nod and a parting wave of the hand, he took his way through the awakening streets to his lonely lodging.

On returning to his rooms upon the last day when his services as watchman were required, the holidays being over, Lōic heaved a deep sigh of relief, for the effect of the hardships undergone during those freezing nights was beginning to get the better of his strength of endurance.

He awoke after his first long sleep with a feeling of lassitude positively oppressive in its intensity, and a fearful headache pressing the back of his eyes like hot lead. His bath made him shiver, and he vainly attempted to swallow the coffee which motherly Mrs. Cramp insisted upon making for him. She was not satisfied with her interesting lodger, was Mrs. Cramp; he was a sore puzzle to her, a puzzle she tried quite uselessly to solve; but a warm corner of her childless heart had opened widely to him, and it was with genuine concern that, gazing intently at the curious, drawn look about his eyes late in the afternoon, she said, stoutly:

"You are ill, Mr. Kergōat, and you must not on any account go out again. Indeed, you should let me send for a doctor at once."

A doctor! Lōic smiled a little wanly. Five dollars

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

capital do not encourage one to appeal to the medical profession, and, as for the dispensary or hospital, he was resolved not to go there again. He had been treated kindly during his attack of grippe, but the dismalness of the thing gave him the horrors, and so, shaking his head, he merely replied: "I do feel a trifle queer, but it's only fatigue, and I'll be all right in a day or two, Mrs. Cramp. Still, I think I'll take your advice and stay at home."

Heavy-eyed and clogged of brain, he threw himself all of a heap on the small sofa as soon as she had reluctantly gone, and lay there, with eyes closed, wondering why his chest felt so leathery inside and why there was so strangely uncontrollable a twitching in all the muscles of his legs. The room seemed insufferably hot, too; but when he painfully rose and opened a window his teeth began to chatter, and, having closed it again with an effort, he went back to his sofa and fell into so heavy a sleep that Mrs. Cramp had to shake him into consciousness when, towards night, taking the law into her own hands, she reappeared with the doctor she had sent for in her growing anxiety. This professional gentleman stopped suddenly in the middle of a slightly pompous sentence, when he glanced at the thermometer he had just removed from his patient's mouth and saw what was recorded on it, and although Loic noticed the incident and guessed its cause, he was by now far too ill to care much about it. Indeed, he let himself be helped to bed with an apathy so unlike his brisk, hopeful self that even Mrs. Cramp, who had known him only for so short a time, shook her head despondently.

"What is the matter with him?" she asked of the doctor, as soon as she had him alone in the hall.

"I don't know," he replied, hesitatingly. "It may be a mere heavy cold, but his temperature is so high that I

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

am inclined to think it influenza; he looks dissipated, too—drinks hard, I have no doubt. Well, if he is no better, you can send for me in a day or two." And scenting but little glory and less money in the case of so obscure and probably impoverished a person, the doctor took his departure with inimitable alacrity; but next day Mrs. Cramp started back appalled when a lividly blue face, bedewed with perspiration, drawn and terribly angular, confronted her upon the pillows as she entered the room.

"Mercy on us!" she exclaimed, bending towards him. "You are enough to scare anybody this morning; 'tain't influenza you've got, take my word for it! That doctor's made a mistake, sure! Lord, but you did give me a turn!"

Loïc, speaking in a low, muffled voice and in the jerky manner caused by a knifelike pain that thrust him through the ribs, courteously apologized for having given her "a turn," whereupon the good soul gave vent to a torrent of words, concluding with: "You don't know how much this reminds me of Cramp's last illness—he died of pneumonia, poor dear, and he was as brave as a lion about the pain, though it did make him swear some when it got to be at its worst!"

Loïc smiled quietly. "I assure you," he said, "that I sympathize—with Mr. Cramp, though—in deference to you—who, alas! are not my wife—I'll try and go him one better and not swear—in your presence, at least!" "They say," he added, half to himself after a moment's interval, "that it goes hardest—with men who have been drinking a bit heavily!"

"That's just what the doctor told my old man," acquiesced that lamented gentleman's garrulous widow; then hastily bethinking herself, she continued, "but you

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

are lots younger than he was, and lots stronger, too, so that even if it is pneumonia you have every chance!"

"Thank you!" gasped Lōic. "I'm not a bit afraid, I assure you. *Ah, Mère Corentine vous avez été bonne prophétesse ma pauvre chère vieille!*"

"How?" Mrs. Cramp asked, apprehensively.

"Oh, nothing! I'm not off my head yet; but you can send for the doctor if you like, my good Mrs. Cramp—although I scarcely think—that he will leave wealthier patients for my sake—and I don't care a damn whether he does or not," he added, when she had rushed out of the room almost panic-stricken. "If only I can see Gäidik once—just see Gäidik once again—that's all I ask; and if even that is refused—who knows but—only afterwards will we begin our true life—together—she still here—I—ah!—who knows!"

Waking from a restless doze, a little while later, he stared in surprise at the smoky ceiling—his mind wandering slightly. "It's all my fault—all my fault!" he murmured, in a short-breathed drone. "I was always a fool—and stubborn—as a mule, but when you come for me, Gäid, you'll see I'll do better—you'll bring Kikette back—poor little Kikette—and we will be happy at last. It was only a nightmare, those years and months and days—my own Gäid!" His fingers picked aimlessly at the counterpane, and finally raising himself painfully on his uncomfortable and tumbled pillows, he managed to draw towards him a small table upon which lay spread the contents of that brown-paper parcel from the very bottom of his trunk, the portfolio filled with Gäidik's photographs, and the writing-case, and at last feebly grasped a slim roll of parchments from which great seals depended attached by faded ribbons. "Ah," he whispered, with a low laugh, which made him cough, "the

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

old records—fifth century—fourteen hundred years—it's a long spell of nobility to have it end like this—” and again he laughed.

Suddenly the blind, unseeing look in his eyes vanished, and he turned them consciously to the door which had opened again softly.

“Well, Mrs. Cramp,” he said, in a voice just audible—“brought me something again? You are kind!”

Mrs. Cramp came up to the bed, holding in one hand a pale yellow envelope, and in the other three or four pink and white camellias.

“There now, drat you, Sir, you've uncovered your poor chest again! You're too bad!” she said, quite crossly for her. “I've sent after the doctor, and here's a telegram just come for you, that's been lying at your old rooms down-town for a week; it was a new hand, it appears, that didn't know you, as took it in, and what with one thing and another they didn't think to send it up till to-day—and,” she volubly continued, “here's some flowers, too, since you like them so much, which my little niece has brought me—and—”

At sight of the envelope, Lóic's ashy face had flushed lividly. “Give it to me!” he cried, hoarsely, struggling to sit up, but Mrs. Cramp held him down, and, seeing how terribly his fingers trembled, tore it open for him and spread it out before his eyes:

“I am coming to you. Don't give up hope, all will be well. Tenderest love. GÄID.”

* * * * *

It was evening, only a little after moonrise, and some wonderful silver rays flooded the room. There was but little apparatus of sickness or medicine there—no doctor, no medicine—which perhaps allows one to die easier. Beneath the lamp on the little table near the bed, a

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

handful of simple, home-grown flowerets basking in a white china cup, gave, as Lœic had said an hour before, a comfortable look of home to the whole place, and on a chair near the bed the toy monkey, selected so glee-fully for Kikette's Christmas, was dancing and chattering like mad, having been wound up at his particular request—great baby that he still was in spite of all—to while the time away.

He had been very restless since the receipt of Gäidik's message, but he was lying quiet just now, his head turned sideways on the pillow, his cheek pressed to Gäidik's miniature, at which he glanced now and again with un-speakable love and longing.

"Will she be in time?" he thought, a little drowsily, as Mrs. Cramp, who, seeing him so much calmer, and fondly imagining this to be a good sign, was explaining how futile had been her efforts to get the doctor, and it was almost with his old, mocking smile that he murmured: "Thrifty man, that—doesn't like to waste his visits! But never mind, Mrs. Cramp, you will be rewarded—Gäid will see to that!"

A fearful attack of coughing interrupted him, and in his distress he sprang to his feet, with the desperate hope that he could at last get a deep breath thus.

"No! No! child, you mustn't!" Mrs. Cramp cried out, endeavoring to restrain him; but that magnificent strength of his was not yet quite gone, even if the poor, overstrained heart refused to do him service any longer, and she could not force him down, in spite of all her efforts; but suddenly he fell back of his own accord, gasped once or twice, and lay quite still.

* * * * *

A light step raced up the stairs, and Gäidik, breathless, haggard, travel-worn, stood in that silent little room.

THE TRIDENT AND THE NET

Her expression was so forbidding that poor Mrs. Cramp, who had met her at the front door and now entered after her, recoiled in dismay. The paper-white face, the savagely glittering eyes, and the extraordinary rigidity of the tensely braced little figure, frightened her almost out of her wits, but yet at last she ventured to touch one tightly clinched hand timidly, in her overwhelming sympathy for that voiceless, tearless agony, and Gaidik turned suddenly upon her:

“Do you think that any one will dispute him to me now?” she demanded, fiercely.

THE END

ET

rs. Co

ere:

, the

ight

max

oud

ing

kn

2 2

14 DAY USE
RETURN TO DESK FROM WHICH BORROWED
LOAN DEPT.

This book is due on the last date stamped below,
or on the date to which renewed. Renewals only:

Tel. No. 642-3405

Renewals may be made 4 days prior to date due.
Renewed books are subject to immediate recall.

AUG 21 1972 91
REC. CIR. APR 20 '77

LD21A-60m-8,'70
(N8887s10)476-A.32

General Library
University of California
Berkeley

M304068

THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LIBRARY

